



ILLUSTRIOUS IRISHWOMEN.

ILLUSTRIOUS IRISHWOMEN.

BEING

M E M O I R S

OF SOME OF

THE MOST NOTED IRISHWOMEN

From the Earliest Ages to the
Present Century.

BY

E. OWENS BLACKBURNE,

AUTHOR OF "A WOMAN SCORNED," "THE WAY WOMEN LOVE," ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

HER GRACE

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.

LONDON, 1877.



PREFACE.

IN her beauty and in her obscurity, Ireland has been called, and not inappropriately, “the Cinderella of the Empire.” Her children, when opportunity offers, possess the capabilities of achieving much that is praiseworthy; for Nature has never been niggard of her physical and intellectual gifts to the Irish race; and to preserve in a collected form the names and achievements of some of the more gifted daughters of Erin, has been the silent patriotism of my life.

I am painfully aware of the many deficiencies to be found in these volumes; but I would beg the indulgence of the public, on the plea that this is the *first* time a work of this kind—dealing solely with memoirs of Irishwomen—has been attempted. It had been my original intention to have included notices of some living Irishwomen, whose lives and labours entitle them to a place in a work of this nature; but, acting upon the advice of those more qualified to judge, have refrained from doing so.

There is a good deal of original matter in the book ; I would especially mention some hitherto unpublished poems by William Wordsworth, and the *true* history of the romantic friendship of the "Ladies of Llangollen." For these I tender my best thanks to Charles W. Hamilton, Esq., of Hamwood, Clonee, County Meath, who placed his valuable collection of MSS. and letters at my disposal.

I also take this opportunity of thanking the many friends, acquaintances, and fellow-workers who have kindly answered inquiries, and have afforded me every information in their power. I would particularise Miss Julia Grierson ; Sir Bernard Burke, *Ulster* ; Lady Wilde ; Miss Ellen Clayton ; Charles Reade, Esq. ; Professor O'Looney, M.R.I.A. ; Rev. Ponsonby A. Lyons ; Alfred Webb, Esq. ; the late Henry Wilson, Esq., M.D., M.R.I.A. ; R. Garnett, Esq., the courteous superintendent of the Reading Room of the British Museum ; and his obliging assistants.

E. OWENS BLACKBURNE.

GLOUCESTER ORESCENT, LONDON, N.W.

September, 1877.



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EARLY IRISH PERIOD.

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ILLUSTRIOUS IRISHWOMEN.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

EARLY IRISH PERIOD.

IN the early history of every nation it will be found that mythologic legend is largely blended with plain matter-of-fact. This assertion is said to be especially applicable to early Irish history, although why such an invidious distinction should be made it is difficult to say ; for the same thing holds good concerning the early history of Rome, of Greece, or, indeed, of any other antique nation. The story of Rhea Silvia, and that of Romulus and Remus and the wolf, which are so gravely recorded as historical facts, have no more claims to be believed than have the half-mythical, half-real stories whence the history of the ancient Irish must necessarily be compiled ; and surely they have quite as good a right to pretend to historical accuracy as has the Iliad or the Odyssey. No one attempts to dis-

prove the admixture of poetic fiction, bordering largely on the marvellous, which is interwoven with probabilities in these early romantic chronicles. At the same time, no person of ordinary reflection for a moment doubts but that these half legendary tales represent accurate historic facts and personages. Moreover, it will be admitted that, however obscure, and in many cases irreconcilable, these legends be in themselves, yet they represent these facts more truly and more clearly than can now be done by substituting in their stead any other hypothesis founded upon the so-called wisdom and experience of more recent times.

Eve, according to orthodox belief, changed the whole course of affairs for mankind in her search after knowledge : the subtlety and affection of the mother of Moses provided the Jews with a leader, and a receiver and giver of laws, which influence them down to the present day : Helen of Troy and Cleopatra successively overturned empires : the influence of Elizabeth is the turning-point in the history of England's religious opinions, of its commerce, and of its literature : the political affairs of France have, in all ages, been largely influenced by women : Roger Palmer, afterwards Lord Castlemaine, sold his wife—not at Smithfield, but at Whitehall—to his Majesty King Charles II., for the sum of one peerage, and that an Irish one—

taken on consideration. That woman—Barbara Villiers, Lady Castlemaine, afterwards Duchess of Cleveland—brought England to bankruptcy, and was the indirect cause of the National Debt.

Other instances, gathered from the histories of many lands, might be quoted of the enormous influence exerted by women upon the destinies of nations. But this being a work purporting to be solely about Irishwomen, it remains therefore to be seen how and what they have contributed to the history of their country—whether politically, socially, or intellectually.

There are five great events in the early history of Ireland, and these occurrences have taken place through the instrumentality of women.

1st. The building of the Palace of Emhain-Macha, which subsequently became the residence of the Ulidian kings. The founding of this fortress fixes the first probably accurate date in Irish history.

2nd. In the reign of Queen Méave (or Medbh, the Queen Mab of Shakspeare) occurred the famous Cattle-Spoil, or Cattle Plunder of Cuailgné.* The account of this expedition, undertaken by Queen Méave against Daire Mac-Fiachna, forms the subject of the celebrated *Táin-Bo-Chuailgné*, the

* A district now called Cooley, in the modern county of Louth.

chief of the Irish ancient heroic tales. It supplies the place in Irish literature which Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* do in English.

3rd. St. Brighitt, or Brighid, or Breeyith, or Bride, or Bridget, or Brigit—as her name has been commonly Anglicised—was Abbess of Cill-Dara.* She, following the example of Mélanie on the Continent of Europe, instituted female monasteries or nunneries in Ireland. It is recorded that the virgins who followed her example, and devoted themselves to a religious life, were remarkable for their skill in needlework, and in the illuminating of manuscripts. Therefore, St. Bridget is commonly and justly considered as the first who gave an impetus to Christian female education in Ireland.

4th. Dearbhforguill (or Dervorgill)—the Helen of Irish history—wife of the Prince of Breffny, was abducted by Dermot, King of Leinster. The consequence of this act was the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland.

5th. By the marriage of Eva, daughter of Dermot, King of Leinster, with Richard Fitzgerald, Earl Strongbow, an Anglo-Norman, the entire political attitude of England and Ireland towards each other was changed.

From this marriage is lineally descended her

* Modern Kildare.

Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, Sovereign of Great Britain and Ireland.

Instances might easily be selected of many other women celebrated in early Irish history ; but the enumeration of them might prove tedious, as their lives are more or less mere records of their prowess and intrigues in love and war. Therefore, it has been thought better simply to give a short sketch of the life of each of the five typical women of ancient Ireland.

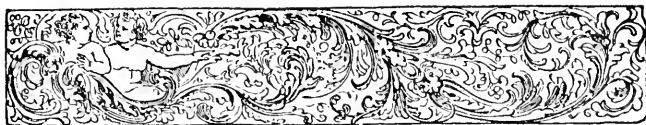
That the early Irish Queens, Macha and Méave, actually lived and moved and had their being, has been established beyond any doubt. It is absolutely impossible to tear them from the framework of romantic legend in which they are set. The reader must, therefore, look upon their lives, as recorded in the old chronicles, as upon two allegorical subjects, where real personages are endowed with attributes which are in themselves sometimes supernatural, but which are based upon actual occurrences.



THE
FIVE REPRESENTATIVE WOMEN
OF
ANCIENT IRELAND.

PART I.

QUEEN MACHA—QUEEN MÉAVE—
SAINT BRIGIT—
DEARBHFORGUILL, THE HELEN OF IRELAND—
AND EVA, WIFE OF STRONGBOW.



QUEEN MACHA.

3603. A.M.

MACHA MONG-RUADH, or Macha of the Red Tresses, is the first Irish queen concerning whom we have any authentic record in the early history of Ireland. The praise of her beauty and prowess has been so often, and so minutely, said and sung by both chroniclers and bards, that it requires no very great effort of the imagination to fancy her standing at the head of her stalwart-looking troops, with her long ruddy hair streaming on the wind, her regal mantle thrown carelessly around her, and fastened on the right shoulder—in order to leave her right hand and arm free—with the famous golden brooch, of which more anon.

A veritable Queen of Beauty sufficient to sway the hearts of men, the only empire which, in these primitive, patriarchal times, they were willing to concede to a woman. But Macha Mong-Ruadh wanted something more. She aimed at the sove-

reignty of the kingdom left to her by her father, Aedh Ruadh, whose sole child she was.

Womanlike, she aimed at power, and womanlike, she attained her desire by stratagem.

Aedh Ruadh, Kimbaoth, and Dithorba reigned over the Ulidians in alternate succession, each for the period of seven years, until they had each enjoyed the royal power three times respectively. Then Aedh Ruadh died, leaving no posterity except Macha Mong-Ruadh, his only daughter, who, when the turn came that should have been her father's, claimed her right to the alternate succession as his representative. This was refused. Dithorba and his sons repudiated her claim, saying that they would never consent to deliver up the royal power into the hands of any woman. The dauntless Macha immediately gathered around her, her father's retainers, and declared war against Dithorba and his sons. She not alone gained the victory, but she reigned for the seven years that her father would have claimed had he been alive. Furthermore, Queen Macha strengthened her position by marrying Kimbaoth.

About this time Dithorba died, leaving behind him three sons, who declared their intention of dividing the kingdom amongst themselves, a proposition which naturally found no favour either in the eyes of Kimbaoth or of Queen

Macha. The latter declared that she owned the kingdom, not under the former guarantee, but by right of battle.

Again she declared war, and a battle was fought, in which Macha was a second time victorious. The sons of Dithorba were completely routed, their army dispersed, and they were obliged to fly and hide themselves in the depths of the forests of Connaught.

But ah! the good saint little knew
What that wily sex can do!

So sang Thomas Moore in the nineteenth century, and so might he have sung in the days of Queen Macha; for, anxious to establish her monarchical power, she went in person and unattended in search of the fugitive sons of Dithorba, determined to lure them into her hands, and thus secure the sovereignty for herself alone.

With this object in view she disguised herself as a leper* by rubbing the dough of rye over her face, and then went in search of the five fugitive princes.

The story goes on to say that she found them

* Leprosy was a very common disease in Ireland formerly. Witness the number of endowments of *Leper Hospitals*, especially in the south of the island.

[NOTE.—Since the above was written, I have been informed by a physician that, at that period, all skin-disease in Ireland was known by the common name of leprosy.—E. O. B.]

in the dense forests of Burren, in the wilds of Connaught, cooking a wild boar, part of which they gave her to eat, and then asked her the news. Having charmed them by her conversational powers, and still more so by the brightness of her eyes, the supposed leper took her departure. One of the brothers, unable to resist her fascinations, followed her into a distant part of the forest. "Here," says the chronicle, "Macha Mong-Ruadh bound him in fetters;" but whether with tangible fetters, or by means of magic arts such as those used by "Comus," is a point upon which the chronicle is tantalisingly silent. Suffice to say, she left him bound, and then returned to try the effects of her charms upon the other four. They questioned her concerning their brother, to which Queen Macha replied that he was unwilling to meet them, being ashamed of having been smitten by the bright glances of a leper. "He needeth it not," runs the chronicle, "for we have all been captivated by the beauteous lustre of your eyes." They then vied with each other in paying court to the seeming leper, who enticed them successively into the forest, and there left them bound, as she had left their brother. She then brought them "tied together" to Emhain.*

* The modern Navan-Fort.

Assembling her chieftains—the men of Ulidia—she demanded of them what she should do with the captives ; and they, with one accord, indignantly declared that they should be put to death. But Macha showed herself to be as well versed in the written Brehon laws of the land—which forbade the putting to death of captives taken in battle—as she was in the unwritten, but, as the history of mankind has proved, far more lasting laws of coquetry, for she answered promptly—

“Not so ; for that would be against the law, and would render my reign unrighteous. But let them be made slaves of, and condemned to build a fortress for me, which shall be for ever henceforth the capital city of this province.”

Thereupon Queen Macha took the golden brooch which fastened her mantle on her right shoulder, and with it she measured the site of the castle or fortress. This building was called the Palace of Emhain-Macha, or “Macha’s Brooch.” The name is derived from two words—“co,” a brooch or pin, and “muin,” meaning “the neck.”*

Historians are very much divided in their opinions as to how much of this story is romance and how much fact, especially O’Flaherty, who, in his “Ogygia,” rejects the legend of the sons of

* *Vide* Sir William Wilde’s Catalogue of the Royal Irish Academy.

Dithorba being "tied together" as altogether fabulous. Some have taken exception to the assertion that Queen Macha marked out the plan of the palace with her brooch. But it seems perfectly feasible that she could have done so, when we consider the enormous size of some of the massive brooches now preserved in the Royal Irish Academy. In the same collection there is preserved a fragment of a huge silver brooch, which must have been even larger than the celebrated gold brooch of Queen Méave, who lived in the century immediately preceding the Christian era. This famous fastening, according to modern calculation, must have weighed about four pounds troy.

This erection of the Palace of Emhain-Macha, in the province of Ulster, is taken as the starting-point of credible Irish history. It was most superbly built, and became the chief residence of the Ulidian kings. The founding of this royal residence is the chief recorded circumstance worthy of remark in this reign. Queen Macha was sovereign of the Ulidians for seven years, and was succeeded by Achy Eolachair, the great-grandson of King Argetmar. There is no mention of this Queen having had any children; and chroniclers are silent as to when and where she died. The one fact alone stands out prominently—namely,

that Queen Macha of the Ulidians caused the five captive sons of Dithorba, either to build or to take part in the building of the palace of Emhain-Macha ; and that the time of its founding is the first date in Irish history upon which any reliance can be placed.





QUEEN MÉAVE.

3937. A.M.

MÉAVE—or Medbh—was the daughter of Ecohaidh, King of Connaught, and of Crochin Croderg, the handmaid of his wife, the Lady Edain, a chieftainess famed for her beauty and accomplishments.* Her three brothers had been killed at the battle of *Ath-Cumair*,† a circumstance which so weakened their father's power that he set up in opposition his daughter Méave as Queen of Connaught. Ecohaidh had five other daughters, named respectively Mumhain, Eile, Deirdre, Clothra, and Eithné—of all of whom strange stories are recorded in many ancient Irish manuscripts. Some chroniclers say that this king had only three daughters. This assertion, which is only found in one manuscript, may be translated thus—

* See MS. *Leabhar-na-h-Uidhre*, in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy.

† The ancient name of a ford near Mullingar.

Three daughters had King Eochaidh Feidlech,
 Loud swells their fame,
 Ethni the Proud, and Méave of Cruachain,*
 And fair Clothrà.

But of all the children of Eochaidh, by far the most celebrated was Méave. From her early youth she had exhibited remarkable traits of strength of mind and vigour of character. Doubtless these qualities influenced her father in his selection, and election, of her as Queen of Connaught, for she had not even the right of seniority, being the third sister.

In the pride of her youth and beauty Méave was married to Conor, the celebrated provincial king of Ulster,† but the marriage did not prove a happy one, and she soon left her husband and returned to her father's court. Here, we are told, she lived as before her ill-assorted union, until her father, who at this time elected her Queen of Connaught, further consolidated her power, and his own, by marrying her to Ailill, a powerful chief of that province. This second husband, and her father Eochaidh, died shortly after the marriage; and

* The remains of the Rath of Cruachain are still to be seen near Carrick-on-Shannon, in the modern county of Roscommon.

† Another account says that Conor proposed for Méave, who refused him, thereby incurring his implacable hatred. He then obtained the hand of her sister, Eithné, who became the mother of the celebrated Forbaide.

much about the same time. Twice had Méave married for political reasons, and now, finding herself a young widow and an independent Queen, she determined to please herself in her selection of another husband.

Ross-Ruadh was at this time King of Leinster, with a family of seven sons, whom, as we gather indirectly, he found it rather difficult to manage, much less to provide for. At this period the kings of Leinster held their courts at the royal palace of Naas ; and it may well be imagined the state of commotion into which the royal household must have been thrown one day by the arrival of Queen Méave's heralds in their "yellow silken shirts, and grass-green mantles." Demanding an audience of Ross-Ruadh, they informed him that their Queen was on a royal progress through Ireland in search of a husband, and that she would stay for a short time at the court of Ross-Ruadh.

The wealthy widow was hospitably received and royally entertained ; and she went no further than Naas in quest of a king-consort. According to the chronicles, she had been rather bullied by her two previous husbands ; and, probably with a view of retaliating upon the sex, she selected the youngest son of Ross-Ruadh, a pretty boy of seventeen, and exactly sixteen years younger than

herself. Ailill—for his name chanced to be the same as that of her second husband—seems to have been all through life a rather characterless sort of person. He does not appear ever to have given the beautiful and high-spirited Queen Méave any assistance in the government of her kingdom. It is quite possible she would have objected to any interference upon his side, and have treated his suggestions with contempt; for there is an unmistakable tone of ironical humour in the way in which the old chroniclers speak of the relations between Ailill and Méave, and of the presents with which she endowed him. The writers of these records were too good courtiers to assert broadly the plain state of the case, which seems to have been, that the wealthy widow of thirty-four fell in love with a pretty weak-headed boy, married him, and petted him.

Nevertheless, all historians agree in saying that the marriage was apparently a happy one. Probably the reason may have been that one will was supreme, and that will was Queen Méave's. She ultimately became the mother of several sons and two daughters, named Findabhair and Lindabar. One of the latter plays no unimportant part in the expedition celebrated in the *Táin-Bo-Chuailgné*, or "The Cattle Spoil of Cuailgné"—the great event of this Queen's reign.

“Did I not honour thee above thy fellows in making thee my husband, and thou but a younger son of the King of Leinster? Did I not present thee with twelve suits of robes; a chariot worth three times seven cumals;* the breadth of thy face of red gold;† and a bracelet of Findruine‡ to fit thy left wrist!”

The speaker was Méave, Queen of Connaught; the one addressed was her third husband, Ailill; and the scene of the controversy was the conjugal couch. It was scarcely a generous, queenly thing for Queen Méave to twit her husband with the benefits which she had, of her own accord, heaped upon him. But these were rude, primitive times, and the grand art of dissembling words and feelings was not then considered the whole duty of man or woman. Repression is the outcome of civilisation.

The Queen and her King-consort were having a dispute respecting the amount of their respective wealth and treasures. Méave must have been lavish of her gifts to Ailill, for they found it difficult to decide which had the most; and, in order to come to a satisfactory conclusion, they

* Sixty-three cows.

† Doubtless one of those deep crescents of red gold, of which there are some magnificent specimens preserved in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy.

‡ Carved white metal, probably silver bronze.

were obliged to have recourse to an actual comparison of the kind and extent of their several possessions.

The following account of this enumeration of their respective treasures, and the unforeseen results of this inquiry, are condensed and taken from the *Táin-Bo-Chuairlné*, or the “Cattle-Spoil of Cuairlné,” the oldest and most remarkable of the ancient Irish heroic tales. This chronicle is of inestimable value; for, notwithstanding the halo of romance which undoubtedly surrounds the whole story, yet the chief actors in the expedition are all well known and undoubted historical characters, and are to be met with, not only in the ancient heroic tales, but also in the authentic annals.

As the result of the pillow-controversy just referred to, between Queen Méave and Ailill, we are told in the *Táin-Bo-Chuairlné*—

“There were compared before them all their wooden and their metal vessels of value; and they were found to be equal. There were brought to them their finger-rings, their clasps, their bracelets, their thumb-rings, their diadems, and their gorgets of gold; and they were found to be equal. There were brought to them their garments of crimson and blue, and black and green, and yellow and mottled, and white and streaked; and they were found to be equal. There were brought

before them their great flocks of sheep, from greens and lawns and plains ; and they were found to be equal. There were brought before them their steeds and their studs, from pastures and from fields ; and they were found to be equal. There were brought before them their great herds of swine, from forests, from deep glens, and from solitudes ; their herds and their droves of cows were brought before them, from the forests and most remote solitudes of the province ; and, on counting and comparing them, they were found to be equal in number and excellence. But there was found among Ailill's herds a young bull, which had been calved by one of Méave's cows, and which"—as the chronicle gravely informs us—"not deeming it honourable to be under a woman's control, went over and attached himself to Ailill's herds.

"The name of this remarkable animal was *Finnbheannach*, or the 'White-horned,' and it was found that the Queen had not among her herds one to match him. This was a matter of deep disappointment to her. She immediately summoned to her presence MacRoth, her chief courier, and demanded of him if he knew where a young bull to match the *Finnbheannach* could be found among the five provinces of Erin.

"MacRoth answered, that he knew where there was a better and a finer bull—namely, in the pos-

session of Daré, son of Fachtna, in the Cantred of Cuailgné, and province of Ulster; and that his name was the *Donn Chuailgné*, or Brown Bull of Cuailgné.

“‘Go thou, then,’ said Méave, ‘with a request to Daré from me, for the loan of the *Donn Chuailgné* for my herds for one year. Tell him that he shall be well repaid for his loan; that he shall receive fifty heifers, and the *Donn Chuailgné* back at the expiration of that time. And you may make another proposition to him,’ continued the Queen—‘namely, that should the people of the district object to his lending us the *Donn Chuailgné*, he may come himself with his bull, and that he shall have the full extent of his own territory given him of the best land in *Magh-Ai*,* a chariot worth thrice seven cumals (*sixty-three cows*), and my future friendship.’

“The courier set out with a company of nine subordinates, and in due time arrived in Cuailgné and delivered his message to Daré Mac-Fiachna, who received him hospitably. On learning Mac-Roth’s errand, he at once agreed to accept the terms; and then sent the courier and his companions into a distant part of his establishment, furnishing them abundantly with the best of food and drink.

* Plains of Roscommon.

“In the course of the night, when deep in their cups, one of the Connaught couriers said to another, ‘It is a truth that the man of this house is a good man, and it is very good of him to grant to us, nine messengers, what it would be a great work for the other four great provinces of Erin to take by force—namely, the *Donn Chuailgné*.’ Then a third courier interposed, and said that little thanks were due to Daré, because if he had not consented freely to give the *Donn Chuailgné*, he should be compelled to do so.

“At this moment, Daré’s chief steward, accompanied by a man laden with food and another with drink, entered, and overhearing the vaunt of the third courier, flew into a passion, and cast down their meat and drink before them, without inviting them to partake of it.

“They then went and told their master, and Daré swore by his gods that Méave should not have the *Donn Chuailgné*, either by consent or by force.”

According to the chronicle, the refusal of Daré so exasperated Méave, that she gathered together her forces and declared war against him. Her army was divided into three parties, whose appearances are best described in the words of the original chronicle:—

“The first party came with uncut hair; they

wore green cloaks, with silver brooches ; the shirts which they wore next their skin were interwoven with thread of gold. The second company had closely cut hair, light grey cloaks, and pure white shirts next their skin. The third and last party had broad cut, fair yellow, golden loose flowing hair upon them ; they wore crimson embroidered cloaks, with stone set brooches over their breasts (in the cloaks), and fine long silken shirts falling to the insteps of their feet."

It would be tedious to recount the minute descriptions of the dress and ornaments of the various Irish clans, as recorded in the manuscript. He who runs may read, if he have sufficient patience ; and now we pass on to the actual story of the *Donn Chuailgné*.

"The forces of Daré and Méave met at Cruachain, and after consulting her Druid and a *Bean-sidhe** who appeared to her, Méave and her troops crossed the Shannon at Athlone, and encamped at Kells. She was accompanied by Ailill and their daughter *Fíndabhair*, or 'The Fair-browed.' When they had encamped for the night, the Queen invited all the leaders of the army to feast with her, and in the course of the evening contrived to

* The "Banshee" of more recent times. Literally it means "a woman of the fairy mansions."

enter into a private conversation with each of the bravest and most powerful amongst them, exhorting them to valour and fidelity in her cause, and secretly promising to each the hand of her beautiful daughter in marriage. After a fierce battle, Méave succeeded in capturing the *Donn Chuailgné*, and in bearing him in triumph to her own country."

This wild tale further gravely informs us that—"When the *Donn Chuailgné* found himself in a strange territory and among strange herds, he raised such a loud bellowing as had never before been heard in the province of Connacht; that on hearing these unusual sounds, Ailill's bull, the *Finnbheannach*, or 'White-horned,' knew that some strange and formidable foe had entered into his territory, and that he immediately advanced at full speed to the point from which they issued, where he soon arrived in the presence of his noble enemy. The sight of each other was the signal for battle. In the poetic language of the tale, the province rang with the echoes of their roaring; the sky was darkened by the sods of earth they threw up with their feet and the foam that flew from their mouth. Faint-hearted men, women, and children hid themselves in caves, caverns, and clefts of the rocks; whilst even the most veteran warriors but dared to view the combat from the neighbouring hills and eminences. The *Finnbhean-*

nach, or ‘White-horned,’ at length gave way, and retreated towards a certain pass opening into the plain where the battle raged. The *Donn Chuailgné*, at last coming up with his opponent, raised him on his horns, ran off with him, passed the gates of Méave’s palace, tossing and shaking him as he went, until at last he shattered him to pieces, dropping the disjointed members as he went along. And wherever a part fell, that place retained the name of that joint ever after. And thus it was (we are told) that *Ath Luain*,* which was before called *Ath Mór*, or the Great Ford, received its present name from the *Finnbheannach*’s *Luain*, or ‘loin,’ having been dropped there.

“The *Donn Chuailgné*, after having shaken his enemy in this manner from his horns, returned into his own country. He was in such a frenzied state of excitement and fury that all fled everywhere at his approach. He faced directly to his old home, but the people of the *bailé*, or hamlet, fled, and hid themselves behind a huge mass of rock. His madness transformed this obstacle into the shape of another bull, so that, coming with all his force against it, he dashed out his brains and was killed.”

* The modern *Athlone*.—JOYCE.

The foregoing is a brief sketch of the most remarkable tale in Irish language. It is especially valuable, inasmuch as it gives innumerable instances of perhaps every occurrence which could be supposed to happen in ancient Irish social and political life. It is a minute epitome of the age in which it was written, giving, as it does, many descriptive details of the manners and customs of the people, of the druidical and fairy influence supposed to be exercised in the affairs of men; of the laws of Irish chivalry and honour; of the standards of beauty, morality, valour, truth, and fidelity of the Irish of old; of the regal power and dignity of the monarch and provincial kings. There is also to be learned from it much concerning the division of the country into its local dependencies, lists of its chieftains and chieftaincies, many valuable topographical details, the names and kinds of dress and ornament, of military weapons and musical instruments used by the army;* of leechcraft, and of medicinal plants and springs. All these are of inestimable value to the student of history, even though mixed up with much of the marvellous.

“Queen Mab,” a dame of credit and renown in Faëry-land, is supposed to have been none other

* Strange to say, there is no mention whatever of “trumpets.”

originally than this famous Amazonian Queen of Connaught. It is certain that the bards of her time, in celebrating her beauty and fascinations, have ridiculously idealised her, and have reduced her, physically, to the most fairy-like proportions. Much of the faëry lore to be found in Spenser's "Faëry Queen," is well known to have been gathered in Ireland during the poet's residence in Kilcolman Castle, County of Cork, where this wondrous poem was chiefly written ; and comparative research has identified his heroine with the Queen of Connaught.

The character must have been a favourite one at this period, for we find Shakspeare, in "Romeo and Juliet," saying—

O, then, I see, Queen Mab has been with you.
She is the fairies' midwife.

This last line as often read, "The fancy's midwife," does not mean the midwife *to* the fairies, but merely the power in faëry-land, whose business it was to deliver the fancies of sleepers of their dreams, those children of an idle brain.

Moreover, the name "Méave," or "Medbh," as it was commonly spelt, suggests the more familiar cognomen of "Mab." The "e" in "Medbh" (which is the old spelling) was pronounced very broadly (something like the middle letter in the word "say"), and the "d" and the "h" being

suppressed by the aspirate, the phonetic spelling would be "Mab," or "Meb."

According to the annals of the Four Masters, Queen Méave lived to the great age of one hundred and twenty, surviving her husband Ailill seven years, and dying in the seventieth year of the Christian era. Even then she did not die a natural death, but was slain by the son of Conchobar, one of her most inveterate enemies. The following is Keating's translation of "The death of Mebh of Cruachain" :—

"When Ailill had been slain by Conrach Kea-ruach, Mebh went to dwell at Inis-Clothram, on Loch Ribh, and during her residence there it was her wont to take a bath every morning in a spring that lay near the entrance to the island. When Forbaide, son of Conchobar, had heard this, he came privately to the spring, and measured with a line the distance thence to the other side of the lake. He then brought the measure with him into Ulster, and there he used to thrust two stakes into the ground, and to each of them he fastened an end of the line. He then used to place an apple on the point of one of the stakes, and standing himself at the other he made constant practice of throwing at the apple on the opposite one, until he succeeded in hitting it. This exercise he practised continually, until he became so dexterous

that he never missed a single throw at the apple. Shortly after this there was a meeting of the people of Ulster and Connaught, on both sides of the Shannon, at Inis-Clothram, and Furbaidé came thither from the east in the assemblage of the Ulster men ; and one morning whilst he stayed there he saw Mebh bathing, as usual, in the very same spring. He thereupon instantly placed a stone in his sling, and having cast it, he hit her full on the forehead and she instantly died, having then enjoyed the kingdom of Connacht for ninety-eight years.”*

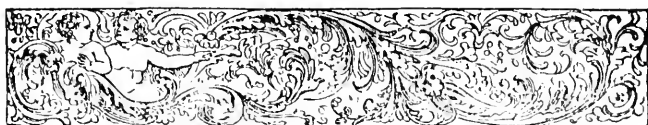
The political character of Queen Méave far outshines her private reputation. Of the latter, there are many details given to which we have as much right to accord credence as to any other recorded circumstance of her long and eventful reign. But it is unnecessary to recount them, as they have had no bearing upon the important affairs of the period, at least not as far as we know. The famous expedition recorded in the *Táin-Bo-Chuailgne* is the chief feature of the period, and is well worthy of the attention of the poet, the philosopher, and the historian. This Historic Tale is to Celtic History what the myth of the Argonautic Expedition, or of the Seven against Thebes, is to Grecian.

* *Vide* Keating, pp. 276-77.

In Miss Cusack's "History of Ireland," she says :—

"The following passage is taken from 'The Book of Ballymott,' and is supposed to be taken from the Synchronisms of Flann of Monasterboice :—'In the fourteenth year of the reign of Conairé and of Conchobar, Mary was born, and in the fourth year after the birth of Mary, the expedition of the Táin-Bó-Chuailgné took place. Eight years after the expedition of the Táin, Christ was born.'"





SAINT BRIGIT.

BORN A.D. 439. DIED A.D. 525.

SAINTE BRIGHITT, or Brighid, or Breeyith, or Bride, or Bridget, or Brigit, as her name has been at various periods Anglicised, was descended from the illustrious family of the Fotharda, of Leinster.

Her genealogy is thus given in the bardic senchas :

Brighitt was the daughter of Dubthach Donn.
Son of Dremni, son of Bresal of smooth hair,
Son of Dian, son of Conula, son of Art,
Son of Carbri Niadh, son of Cormac,
Son of Aengus Mor, of high esteem,
Son of Eocaidh Finn, whom Art detested,
Son of wise Feidlimidh the Legal,
The glorious Tuathal Tectmar's son.

Divesting her of the supernatural gifts attributed to her, and trying to sift the truth from the many absurd stories related concerning her, Saint Brigit stands forth a great and good woman. In an age when the position of her sex was a subordinate one intellectually, she accomplished a work which, considering the disposition of the times, may well have been considered, in that age,

as almost superhuman. Of her learning, her blameless life, and her wise judgment, there can be no question : and in such reverence was she held, that to swear by her name was considered the most solemn oath.

There were fifteen saints of the name of Brigit ; the most famous of whom, and the first of the name, was the subject of this memoir. She was the daughter of the Leinster man, Dubthach, who was descended from Eochaidh Finn Fuathairt, brother of the renowned Conn of the Hundred Battles. From this celebrated chieftain is also lineally descended her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.

About the middle of the fourth century after Christ, much religious enthusiasm was stirred up upon the Continent by the institution of female monasteries, or nunneries, by Mélanie, a pious woman of noble birth. The fame of her piety and good deeds, and of those of her followers and successors, spread even to Ireland, and quickened into life the seeds of Christianity sown by Saint Patrick. Following the example of Mélanie, Saint Brigit instituted a religious order for women, which rapidly spread its branches through every part of the country. She took religious vows at a very early age, when, as we are told, "she was clothed in the white garment, and the white veil

placed upon her head." Seven or eight other young noble maidens immediately took the same step, and, attaching themselves to her fortunes, formed, at the first, her small religious community. The pure sanctity of this virgin's life, and the supernatural gifts attributed to her, spread the fame she had already acquired every day, and crowds of young women and widows applied for admission into her institution. At first she contented herself with founding establishments for her followers in the respective districts of which they were natives. However, the increasing number of those who were immediately under her personal superintendence, rendered it necessary that she should form one great central establishment over which she should herself preside. The people of Leinster were "her own people"—that phrase so dear to the Irish heart in all ages!—and, therefore, amongst them she decided to take up her permanent abode.

Accordingly, she chose a site for her monastery in the midst of the green undulating pastures of Leinster. The name of the place was called *Cill-Dara*, or the Cell of the Oak, from a very high oak-tree which grew near the spot, and the trunk of which was still remaining in the twelfth century, "no one daring to touch it with a knife."*

* Giraldus Cambrensis.

extraordinary veneration in which Saint Brigit was held, caused such a resort of pilgrims of all ranks to the place—such crowds of penitents and mendicants, that a new town* sprang up rapidly around her, which kept pace with the growing prosperity of the establishment.

The selection of this particular site for her monastery, or nunnery, is an instance of the wise judgment for which Saint Brigit was remarkable. Druidism had not yet been swept away from the land, and the old, venerable oak must have been, in the minds of the majority, invested with a peculiar solemnity. Therefore it was a wise policy of hers not to ride roughshod over ancient prejudices, but to try and convert to the purposes of Christianity those forms and usages which had so long been made to serve as instruments of error. Mention is made of the holy fire, which was always kept burning upon the altar, and which was clearly a relic of Pagan times; for the Druidesses preserved from remotest ages an inextinguishable fire. It is very likely that Saint Brigit, in her anxiety to conciliate the masses, and also from her simple Christian desire not to offend, permitted the fire to be continued, but made it emblematical of an article of the new or Christian faith. It is well known

* The modern town of Kildare.

that in earlier ages Saint Patrick engrafted Christian festivals upon Pagan ones. Indeed, all Irish religious festivals have more or less an element of Paganism mixed up with them; this is quite patent to any observant person who has lived amongst the Irish peasantry, and who is conversant with their habits and customs.

Giraldus Cambrensis, who lived six hundred years later than Saint Brigit, thus refers to the sacred fire of Cill-Dara :—

“At Kildare, in Leinster, celebrated for the glorious Brigit, many miracles have been wrought worthy of memory. Among these the first that occurs is the fire of Saint Brigit, which is reported never to go out; not that it cannot be extinguished, but the nuns and holy women tend and feed it, adding fuel with such watchful and diligent care, that from the time of the Virgin* it has continued burning through a long course of years; and although such heaps of wood have been consumed during this long period, there has been no accumulation of ashes.

“As in the time of Saint Brigit, twenty nuns were there engaged in the Lord’s warfare, she herself being the twentieth. After her glorious departure, nineteen have always formed the society,

* *i.e.*, Saint Bridget.

the number having never been increased. Each of them has the care of the fire for a single night in turn, and on the evening before the twentieth night, the last nun, having heaped wood upon the fire, says :—‘ Brigit, take charge of your own fire, for this night belongs to you.’ She then leaves the fire, and in the morning it is found that the fire has not gone out, and that the usual quantity of fuel has been used.

“ This fire is surrounded by a hedge made of stakes and brushwood, and forming a circle within which no man can enter ; and if any one should presume to enter, which has sometimes been attempted by rash men, he will not escape the divine vengeance. Moreover, it is only lawful for women to blow the fire, fanning it, or using bellows only, and not with their breath.”

Henry de Londres, Archbishop of Dublin, considering this fire a remnant of Pagan superstition, caused it to be extinguished in 1220, but it was afterwards renewed, and continued until the suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII.

Giraldus also gives an account of the illuminations said to have been executed by Saint Brigit and her nuns. He particularly mentions one manuscript said to have been written by the Abbess herself, at the dictation of an angel. It contained the Four Gospels according to Saint Jerome, and

every page was richly illuminated with a variety of brilliant colours. Judging from the description given, the book may well have been supposed to have been miraculously written, amongst a people so little conversant with art as the mass of the Irish of that age. "The Book of Kildare," as it was called, is unfortunately lost, but there is preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, an early copy of the Gospels, called "The Book of Kells," which, for the beauty and splendour of its caligraphy and illuminations, is not surpassed by any of its age that is known to exist. "Indeed," says the late Dr. Petrie, "on looking at this exquisite piece of workmanship, it is difficult to avoid thinking that it is the very manuscript so elaborately described by Giraldus."

The fame of Saint Brigit's sanctity spread wherever the Christian religion was recognised. Saint Ailbe of Emly—one of the fathers of the Irish Church—used to visit her. The ancient Welsh author, Gildas, was one of her intimate friends, and is said to have sent to Saint Brigit a small bell cast by himself. In that age, small portable bells were commonly interchanged between ecclesiastics as tokens of regard. They were looked upon with especial veneration; and the chronicler, Colgan, says, that the tolling of the sacred bell of Saint Patrick was a preservative against evil

spirits and magicians, and could be heard from the Giant's Causeway to Cape Clear—from the Hill of Howth to the western shores of Connemara! The Hebrides, or Ey-Brides, *i.e.*, "The Isles of Brigit," were called after her, and dispute with Ireland the honour of possessing her remains. But, according to Giraldus Cambrensis, she died at Kildare, and was buried there also.

By one of those violations of chronology so often hazarded for the sake of bringing illustrious personages together, a friendship is supposed to have existed between Saint Brigit and Saint Patrick. But the dates are inconsistent. It is just possible she may have seen the Apostle of Ireland when she was a child, for she must have been about twelve years of age when he died. Tradition goes as far as to say that she wore, at his especial request, the shroud in which he was buried. But there is no reliance to be placed upon this story, any more than upon the legend of "Saint Brigit's Shawl"—which merits a place in this memoir, inasmuch as that it is one of the chief tales in the folk-lore of Leinster. The story runs as follows:—

"Saint Brigit, when young, was very beautiful, and, as a natural result, had many admirers. But she had early vowed herself to the service of God, and paid no attention to her would-be lovers. In order to get rid of them altogether, she prayed

for some disease that might destroy her beauty. Her prayers were answered, for she was smitten with small-pox, which utterly disfigured one side of her face, leaving the other as beautiful as ever.

“Some time after she had taken the veil, finding her followers become very numerous, she applied to the then King of Leinster for a small piece of land upon which to build a nunnery. She went to entreat this favour in person, and the king, who saw only the beautiful side of her face, was so captivated with her, that he at once granted her request. The story goes on to say that the queen, who was old and very ugly, became jealous of Saint Brigit, and before the interview was over managed that the king should see the other side of Brigit’s face. This so annoyed and disenchanted him, that he at once revoked his promise. Saint Brigit prayed of him to hold to his former decision, but he was deaf to all her entreaties; however, he at length agreed to give her as much land as her shawl would cover.

“Six months passed away, and then Brigit came to claim the promised ‘bit of land.’ In the presence of the king, the queen, and the assembled court, Saint Brigit took off her shawl in order to measure the ground. But what was the dismay and amazement of the king when he saw her give

a corner to each of four of her nuns, who ran north, south, east, and west! The shawl—which Saint Brigit had herself spun during the six months which had intervened—was of some web-like substance, and gradually unfolded until it covered what is now the Curragh of Kildare, and which she claimed in fulfilment of the king's promise."

So runs the legend, as it is often told by many a fireside in Leinster. Speaking of the Abbey of *Cill-Dara*, Giraldus Cambrensis says:—

"In this neighbourhood there are some very beautiful meadows called Saint Brigit's pastures, in which no plough is ever suffered to turn a furrow. Respecting these meadows it is held as a miracle that, although all the cattle in the province should graze the herbage from morning till night, the next day the grass would be as luxuriant as ever. It may be said, indeed, of them:

Et quantum longis carpunt armenta diebus,
Exigua tantum gelidus ros nocte reponit."*

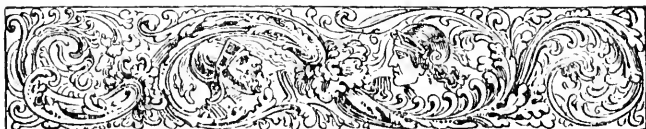
Saint Brigit died, full of years and honour, on the first day of February, A.D. 525, in the seventy-fifth year of her age, and four years after the birth of Columbkille. A remarkable and a good woman

* "Cropt in the summer's day by herds, the dew's
Refreshng moisture verdure still renews."

VIRGIL, *Georg.*, ii. 201-2. .

to have lived during any age ; her character and her good deeds stand forth all the more pre-eminently, with the rude times during which she lived as a background for them, and her memory is well worthy of the pious veneration in which it is justly held.





DEARBHFORGUILL,

THE HELEN OF IRELAND.

A.D. 1152.

BEFORE recording the few meagre details to be gathered respecting Eva, the wife of Earl Strongbow, some brief memoir is necessary respecting the fair and frail Princess of Breffny.

In 1066, William the Norman had invaded and conquered England. More than one hundred years had passed away since that date, yet the Norman conquest of Ireland remained unattempted. Three kings of the race had ruled England, and as yet no Norman knight had set foot upon Irish soil.

At length they came, and the story of their coming begins with just such a domestic drama as Homer had turned into an epic two thousand years ago. Had Helen never been stolen, the Iliad would never have been written; and, in all probability, had not the Princess of Breffny fled from her lawful husband to her unlawful lover, Ireland would not so early have lost standing as an independent kingdom.

Dearbhforguill—or Dervorgil, as she is more commonly called—was the daughter of Mortough MacFloinn, King of Meath. She was early married to Tiegernach O'Rourke, Prince of Breffny; but the marriage, notwithstanding Thomas Moore's pathetic ballad anent the despair of the bereaved husband, does not seem ever to have been a happy one, or one in accordance with the wishes of the lady. With the exception of Roderick O'Connor, the *Ard-righ*, or chief king of Ireland, the most powerful monarch of the provincial kings was Dermot, King of Leinster. Giraldus Cambrensis says he was "a tall man of stature, of a large and great body, a valiant and bold warrior, and, by reason of his continued hallooing, his voice was hoarse. He rather chose to be feared than to be loved. Rough and generous, hateful unto strangers, he would be against all men, and all men against him." Such was the man for whom the beautiful Princess of Breffny conceived so overwhelming a love. They carried on a private correspondence for some time, and at length the faithless wife contrived to let her lover know that her husband was about to set out on a pilgrimage (an act of piety frequent in those days), and conjured Dermot to seize upon the opportunity, and to come and carry her away.

Although Dervorgil made this proposal—one

which Dermot but too readily embraced—she had not the courage to fly to her lover and to defy the world. Artifice was again resorted to, in order to try and make her crime appear the less ; so that when Dermot, King of Leinster, came with an armed band of followers, and appeared to bear off the Princess of Breffny by force, she shrieked for help, and was thus borne away, leaving upon the minds of her retainers the impression that their beautiful chieftainess had been basely taken off against her will. No better evidence of her connivance can be deduced, than the fact that she took away with her the cattle which formed her dowry.

Such was the story which O'Rourke was told upon his return from his pilgrimage. He was goaded to madness at this insult to himself and to his house. He knew that Dermot was a most powerful prince, and that were he (O'Rourke) to bring his small band of retainers against the King of Leinster's numerous kerns and galloglasses, that he would soon be ignominiously routed and defeated. In his distress he applied to Roderick O'Connor, the supreme King of Ireland. The latter summoned together all the provincial kings and chieftains of the land, and in solemn conclave they voted that the outrage be considered as a national grievance, and agreed to help O'Rourke

in his raid against the crowned seducer, Dermot, King of Leinster.

Not expecting to find all Ireland, save his own immediate territory, leagued against him, Dermot was reduced to desperate straits. In his distress, he formed an alliance with the Danes of Dublin—the abhorred of his countrymen, but the only allies he could find in his great need. A fierce battle was fought, in which Dermot was totally defeated, and taken prisoner. He was arraigned before the assembled kings of Ireland, with Roderick O'Connor at their head, solemnly deposed, his principality taken from him, and he himself banished the kingdom.

The guilty Dervorgil was retaken and restored to her injured husband ; but he, having revenged himself upon Dermot, refused to have anything more to say to his false wife. There is little more to be said concerning her. When her husband spurned her, she retired to the nunnery of Mellifont, where she lived as a penitent until her death, which took place forty years afterwards. Whilst living at Mellifont, it is recorded that she “built a nunnery at Clonmacnoise, gave a chalice of gold to the altar of Mary, and cloth for nine altars of the church.”

“Such,” says Giraldus Cambrensis, “is the variable and fickle nature of women, by whom all

the mischiefs in the world (for the most part) do happen and come, as may appear by Marcus Antonius, and by the destruction of Troy."

The crime of Dervorgil and its disastrous consequences, overturned the whole monarchical system of Ireland. The recital of these results belongs to the story of Eva, daughter of Dermot, King of Leinster. There is some doubt as to the *exact* date of Dervorgil's abduction, but there is no question but that the latter was the immediate cause of the English invasion.

The following is Thomas Moore's ballad upon the subject of the abduction of Dervorgil :—

THE SONG OF O'RUARK.

PRINCE OF BREFFNI.

The valley lay smiling before me,
Where lately I left her behind ;
Yet I trembled, and something hung o'er me,
That sadden'd the joy of my mind.
I looked for the lamp which, she told me,
Should shine when her pilgrim return'd,
But, though darkness began to infold me,
No lamp from the battlements burn'd.

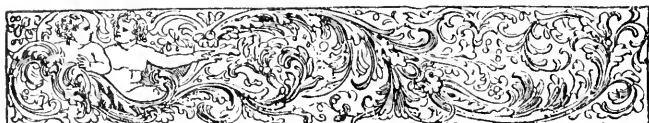
I flew to her chamber—'twas lonely,
As if the lov'd tenant lay dead—
Ah ! would it were death, and death only,
But, no ; the young false one had fled !
And there hung the lute that could soften
My very worst pains into bliss ;
While the hand that had wak'd it so often
Now throbb'd to a proud rival's kiss.

There *was* a time, falsest of women !
When Breffni's good sword would have sought
That man, through a million of foemen,
Who dared but to wrong thee *in thought* !
Whilst now—oh ! degenerate daughter
Of Erin, how fall'n is thy fame !
And through ages of bondage and slaughter,
Our country shall bleed for thy shame.

Already the curse is upon her,
And strangers her valleys profane !
They come to divide, to dishonour,
And tyrants they long will remain.
Put onward !—the green banner rearing—
Go, flesh every sword to the hilt !
On *our* side is Virtue and Erin,
On *theirs* is the Saxon and Guilt !

Pretty verses—full of smoothness and sweetness,
but also full of the poet's customary pinchbeck
patriotism.





EVA, PRINCESS OF LEINSTER, AND COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE.

A.D. 1171.

WHEN Dermot, deposed from his kingdom of Leinster, was banished from Ireland, he crossed over to Wales, with the intention of seeking aid in helping him to recover his territory. His resources in Ireland had all failed, for his allies, the Danes, who had held undisputed possession of Dublin for four hundred years previously, had been completely routed by Roderick O'Connor and the confederate kings. He was tolerably successful in his search for help, for in about a year after his banishment Dermot returned to his native land at the head of a band of Welsh mercenaries.

He landed near Dublin—some say at Howth or Clontarf—and marched at once to the city, hoping to find there some of his late allies, the Danes. But in this he was disappointed. He found Dublin well garrisoned by his former enemies, who gave him immediate battle, routed him again, and

further, seeing he was in the possession of funds, obliged him to pay one hundred ounces of gold to O'Rourke, of Breffny, as indemnification "for the wrong he had done him respecting his wife." Not content with this, Róderick O'Connor obliged him to give up his only son as a hostage, and a guarantee that he would not again attempt to recover his territory.

But whilst these treaties were being carried on, and Dermot was apparently acquiescing in them, the man could not help being true to his faithless nature, and whilst these arrangements were being made he was secretly soliciting English aid, and that not unsuccessfully.

Again a banished man, Dermot went off to France on this occasion, where was Henry, King of England, who was then carrying on a series of skirmishes in that country, disturbances which can scarcely be dignified by the name of a war. To him the ex-King of Leinster applied for aid. But Henry II. wanted all his own troops, and could ill spare a single man. This Norman-English king was a crafty, aspiring, and ambitious monarch, who thought "the whole world was little enough for the dominion of one sovereign;" so, with his customary cautiousness, he listened to Dermot's story, in the hope that he might be able to utilise him in some way.

Henry had already set his eye upon Ireland, but he had no sufficient reason to attempt its invasion, and he was too politic to do so without some plausible excuse for it.

Here was the opportunity thrown in his way! But Henry was too diplomatic to let Dermot see that he was anxious to help him, or that he had any ulterior designs upon Ireland. So, with apparent indifference, he dismissed the Irish chieftain, regretting his inability to render him any assistance, but giving him leave to enlist in his cause any of the Anglo-Norman nobles who might be willing to assist him. Dermot was disappointed, but not disheartened. He returned to Bristol, and there laid his case before Richard, son of Gilbert, Earl of Pembroke, who agreed to render him help to try and regain his kingdom of Leinster.

This was in the year 1170. Earl Strongbow—as Richard was called—and Dermot set sail with a numerous fleet, having no less an object in view than the conquest, not alone of Dermot's confiscated territory, but of all Ireland. They landed at Wexford, and when Dermot stepped on shore first, and then welcomed his illustrious allies, he little thought that by his hand,

The emerald gem of the Western world
Was set in the crown of a stranger!

But alas ! This compact with the foreigners was sealed with his son's blood. No sooner did Roderick O'Connor hear of the landing of these Norman nobles* than he ordered Kavanagh, the son and hostage of King Dermot, to be put to death. Henceforth, a doom seemed to be on the male heirs of the line of Dermot as fatal as that which rested upon the house of Atrides !

The bribe offered to Strongbow by Dermot was the hand of his daughter Eva† in marriage, with the whole kingdom of Leinster for her dowry. Waterford was at this time considered of equal importance with Dublin. It was in the possession of the Danes, and between them and the Normans there was a fierce battle fought. The Normans were victorious. They captured the city, where Dermot established a mimic court in Reginald's Tower,‡ which yet stands upon the Quay. Here,

* Two other young men of rank had joined the party; they were the sons of the beautiful and infamous Nesta, once the mistress of Henry I., but now the wife of Gerald, Governor of Pembroke and Lord of Carew. The knights were Maurice Fitz-Gerald and Robert Fitz-Stephen. Dermot had promised them the city of Wexford, and two cantreds of land as their reward.

† "Eva" is the Norman rendering of the Irish female Christian name "Acifi."

‡ A few years ago, when visiting this curious and ancient Tower, I found it had been *whitewashed* and otherwise modernized.—E. O. B.

amongst the still reeking horrors of the sacked and ruined city, was celebrated, in haste and confusion, the marriage of Richard Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke, with the Princess Eva :

Sad Eva gazed
All round that bridal field of blood, amazed,
Spoused to new fortunes.

Concerning the personal appearance of the bride, we are left in utter ignorance. Various historians speak of her as being very beautiful, but there is no record to show that she was so. Of the bridegroom, Giraldus Cambrensis says, "He was ruddy, freckle-faced, grey-eyed, his face feminine, his neck little, yet of a high stature, ready with good words and gentle speeches." Upon the wedding day, news arrived that the Danes in the north had revolted; so, leaving his bride in the care of a few trusty followers, he set out at the head of his troops, fought and won a battle at Dublin, and established the Norman power in that city.

Strongbow did not live many years after his conquest of Dublin, where he and Eva resided in comparative peace. He died from the effects of a wound in his foot, which mortified, and he was buried in Christ Church, Dublin, where his monument may yet be seen. It is the figure of a knight (recumbent) in armour, with the upper half of a female figure at his side. They both lie extended

upon a block of stone about two feet high, and upon a slab in the wall above is the following inscription :—

THIS : AVNCIENT : MONUMENT : OF : STRANGBOWE : CALLED : COMES :
STRANGVLENSIS : LORD : OF : CHEPSTO : AND : OGNY : THE : FIRST :
AND : PRINCIPAL : INVADER : OF : IRELAND : 1169 : QVI : OBIIT : 1177 :
THE : MONUMENT : WAS : BROKEN : BY : THE : FALL : OF : THE : ROFFE :
AND : BODYE : OF : CHRISTES : CHVRCH : IN : AN : 1562 : AND : SET :
UP : AGAIN : AT : THE : CHARGES : OF : THE : RIGHT : HONOURABLE :
SR : HENRI : SYDNEY : KNYGHT : OF : THE : NOBLE : ORDER : L :
PRESIDENT : WAILES : L : DEPUTY : OF : IRELAND : 1570.

Whether or not Eva died before or after her husband's death we have no means of ascertaining. But this we know, and purpose to demonstrate, that Eva, Princess of Leinster in her own right, and Countess of Pembroke by marriage, can number amongst her descendants the present Queen of England.

Eva and Strongbow had no male heir, and only one daughter, named Isabel. This girl was sole heiress of Leinster, and of her father's Welsh possessions. She became the ward of Richard Cœur de Lion, who took her to his Court in London. At an early age the king gave her in marriage to William Marshall, hereditary Earl Marshal of England, and Earl of Pembroke and Leinster in right of his wife. They had five sons and five daughters. The five sons inherited the title in

succession, and all died childless—the doom of Dermot's male posterity.

The vast possessions were then divided between the five daughters, each of whom received a county for a dower. Carlow, Kilkenny, the Queen's County, Wexford, and Kildare were the five portions. Isabel, the second daughter, married the Earl of Gloucester, and her granddaughter—an Isabel also—was mother of the great Robert Bruce, who was therefore great-great-great-grandson of Eva and Strongbow. Eva, the third daughter, married the Lord de Breos, and from a daughter of hers, named Eva likewise, descended Edward the Fourth, King of England. Through his granddaughter, Margaret, Queen of Scotland, daughter of Henry the Seventh, the present reigning family of England claim their right to the throne. Through two lines, therefore, her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria can trace back her pedigree to Eva, the Irish princess.

But yet more. Roderick O'Connor, the last King of Ireland, who ended his life as a monk in the monastery of Cong, left no male heir. However, he left a daughter, who married the Norman knight, Hugo de Lacy. They left two sons, Walter and Hugh. The latter was created Earl of Ulster, and left an only daughter, his sole heiress. She married a De Burgo, and a daughter of theirs,

named Ellen, became the wife of Robert Bruce, King of Scotland. It is singular that the mother of Robert Bruce should have been descended from Eva, and his wife from King Roderick's daughter.

Later on, the Princess Margery, the granddaughter of Robert Bruce, married the Lord High Steward of Scotland, and through her the Stuarts claimed the crown. From this point it is easy to trace how the royal blood of the three kingdoms has amalgamated. Another descendant of the Earls of Ulster married Lionel, Duke of Clarence, son of Edward the Third, who, in right of his wife—who was an only child—became Earl of Ulster and Lord of Connaught, and these titles finally merged in the English crown in the person of Edward the Fourth. From all these genealogies one fact may be clearly deduced—namely, that the present representative of the royal Irish races of Eva and Roderick, the lineal heiress of their rights, and the legitimate sovereign of Ireland by right of birth, is her present Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.



PART II.



MEDIÆVAL PERIOD.



MARGARET O'CARROLL.

(MARGARET AU EINIGH.*)

DIED A.D. 1461.

THE best woman of her time in Ireland." So says O'Cleary, in the Annals of the Four Masters, when mentioning Margaret O'Carroll. She was the daughter of O'Carroll, and married, early in the 15th century, Calvach O'Conor, chief of O'sally. She is commonly called "Margaret O'Carroll of O'sally," having retained her maiden name after her marriage, a not uncommon custom with our ancestresses; indeed, in many country parts of Ireland, the custom is prevalent to this day. She must have been a woman of remarkable spirit and capacity; and when to these were united the virtue, benevolence, and piety which all chroniclers agree in ascribing to her, it is no wonder that they felt a pride in recording her good deeds. "She was the one woman that made most of preparing highways, and erecting

* Margaret the Hospitable.

bridges, churches, and mass-books, and of all manner of things profitable to serve God and her soul." So wrote McFirbis, the last antiquary of Lecan, who was contemporary with Margaret O'Carroll, and from whose MSS. all authentic information concerning her must necessarily be gleaned.

But the two leading events of her life seem to have been her famous pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint James of Compostello, in Spain, and "the two invitations of Margaret O'Carroll." Of these events we will speak in the succession in which they have been here named.

In the year of our Lord 1445, there seems to have been a great religious revival in Ireland. The cause is not exactly known, but it is quite possible that it owed its origin to the fact that the monks took alarm at the signs of religious discontent which were spreading rapidly over the Continent of Europe. However, setting aside all hypothesis upon the subject, the fact remains that in this year took place the great Irish pilgrimage "towards the citie of St. James, in Spain," when "the goodlie companie" numbered the chiefs of the names of McDermott, McGeoghegan, O'Driscoll, several of the Munster Geraldines, Eveleen, wife of Pierce D'Alton, and a great number of others, "noble and ignoble." Chief amongst the noble

pilgrims was "the admirable Margaret O'Carroll." The following poem, is founded upon a true incident connected with this great Irish pilgrimage :—

MARGARET O'CARROLL.

I.

Of bards and beadsmen far and near hers was the name of names—
The lady fair of Offally—the flower of Leinster dames—
And she has joined the pilgrim host for the citie of St. James.

II.

It was Calvagh, Lord of Offally, walked wretchedly apart
Within his moated garden, with sorrow at his heart ;
And now he vowed to heaven, and now he cursed his fate—
That he had not forbidden that far journey ere too late.

III.

"Why did I not remember?"—'twas thus he wished in vain—
"The many waves that roll between Monoma's cliffs and Spain?
Why did I not remember how, filled with bitter hate,
To waylay Christian pilgrims the Moorish pirates wait?"

IV.

He thought of Lady Margaret—so fair, so fond, so pure—
A captive in the galley of some Christ-denying Moor !
He thought of all that might befall, until his sole intent
Was to gallop to the eastward, and take the way she went !

V.

The noon was dark, the bitter blast went sighingly along ;
The sky hung low, and, chilled to death, the warder's snatch of
song ;
The limp flag 'round the flagstaff lay folded close and furled—
And all was gloom and solitude upon the outer world.

VI.

A rush as of a javelin-cast the startled chieftain heard—
A glance—upon the castle-wall a carrier dove appeared !
A moment, and the courier had fluttered to his breast,
And, panting, lay against his heart, low cooing and caressed !

VII.

There lay a little billet beneath the stranger's wing,
Bound deftly to his body with a perfumed silken string ;
By night and day, o'er sea and shore, the carrier had flown—
For of God's ways so manifold each creature knows its own.

VIII.

He pressed the billet to his lips, he blessed it on his knees—
"To my dear lord and husband : From Compostella these—
We have arrived in health and peace—thank God and good St.
James !"—
And underneath the simple lines, the lady's name of names.

IX.

"Now blessings on thee, carrier dove !" the joyful Calva' cried,
"In such a flight both heart and wing were surely sorely tried.
True image of thy mistress dear, in mercy's errand bold,
Thy cage shall hang in her own bower, and barred with good red
gold.

X.

"And ever on thee, while thine eyes shall open to the sun,
White-handed girls shall wait and tend, my own undaunted one !
And when thou diest no hand but hers shall lay thee in the grave :
Brave heart ! that bore her errand well across the stormy wave !"

Irish hospitality has been famous in all ages, and in a land where it is looked upon as a sacred duty, Margaret O'Carroll stands forth as a noted example of an Irish hostess of that period. Evidently a woman of culture and refinement, she affected the

society of learned men ; and her “ Two Invitations ” are thus described by Duaid McFibis, the antiquary, who was one of the guests :—

“ A.D. 1451. A gracious yeare this yeare was, though the glory and solace of the Irish was sett, but the glory of Heaven was amplified and extolled therein ; and although this is a yeare of grace (Jubilee) with the Roman Church, it is an ungracious and unglorious yeare to all the Learned in Ireland, both philosophers, poets, guests, strangers, religious persons, souldiers, mendicant, or poore orders, and to all manner and sorts of the poore in Ireland, also for the general support of their maintenance's decease, to wit, Margrett, daughter of Thady O'Caroll, King of Ely, O'Conner Offaly, Calwagh's wife, a woman that never refused any man in the world for anything that she might command, only besides” (*recte*, except only) “ her own body. It is she that twice in one yeare proclaimed to and commonly invited (in the darke dayes of the yeare, to witt, on the feast day of ‘ Da Sinchell ’—26 March—in Killachy) all persons, both Irish and Scottish, or rather Albaines, to the general feasts of bestowing both meat and moneyes, with all manner of gifts, whereunto gathered to receive these gifts and matter of two thousand and seaven hundred persons, besides gamesters and poore men, as it was recorded in a Roll to that

purpose, and that accompt was made thus, *ut videmus*, viz., the chiefe kins of each family of the Learned Irish was by Gille-na-næmh MacEgan's hand, the Chiefe Judg to O'Conor, written in the Roll, and his adherents and kinsmen, so that the aforesaid number of 2700 was listed in that Roll with the arts of *Dan*, or Boetry, musick, and antiquitie. And Mælm O'Mælconry, one of the chiefe learned of Connaght, was the first written in that Roll, and first payed and dicted, or sett to supper, and those of his name after him, and so forth every one as he was payed he was written in that Roll, for feare of mistake, and sett down to eat afterwards. And Margerett on the garrotts of the greate church of Da Sinchell, clad in cloath of gold, her deerest friends about her, her clergy and judges too. Calwagh himself on horseback by the churche's outward side, to the end that all things might be done orderly, and each one served successively. And first of all she gave two chalices of gould as offerings that day on the Alter to God Almighty, and she also caused to nurse or foster too (two) young orphans. But so it was; we never heard neither the like of that day nor comparable to its glory and solace. And she gave the second inviting proclamation (to every one that came not that day) on the feast of the Assumption of our Blessed Lady Mary in harvest, at or in

the Ratte-Imayn,* and so we have been informed that the second day in Ratte-Imayn was nothing inferior to the first."

Thomas D'Arcy McGee has further immortalised her name in the following poem, entitled

THE PRAISE OF MARGARET O'CARROLL OF
OFFALY.

I.

The myriad shafts of the morning sun had routed the woodland
fays,
And in the forest's green saloons danced the victorious rays;
Birds, like Brendans in the promised land, chanted matins to the
morn,
And the larks sprung up with their chorus-broods from the yellow
fields of corn.
In cloth of gold, like a queen new-come out of the roynl wood,
On the round, proud, white-walled rath Margaret O'Carroll stood:
'That day came guests to Rath Imayn from afar from beyond the
sea—
Bards and Bretons of Albyn and Erin—to feast in Offaly!

II.

With the Lady Margaret and her maidens comely to the sight—
Ah! how their eyes will thrill the harps and hearts of men to-night!
And in their midst, like a pillar old, in a garden of roses, stands
Gilla-n-noanh M'Egan, the Brehon of Offaly's lands:
His sallow brow, like a vellum book, with mystic lines is traced,
But his eye is as an arrow, and his form as a brow unbraced;
And he holds in his hand a book wherein he writes each learnèd
name,
And these were the men of lore who to the feast at Rath Imayn
came.

* Modern Rathangan, county Kildare.

III.

First Marhyn O'Mulconry comes, Arch Brehon of the West,
Who gives dominion to O'Connor on Carnfravich's crest ;
And with Marhyn comes M'Firbiss, from Syranley's hills afar,
Whose learning shines, in Erris glens, like a lamp or a lofty star ;
And O'Daly from Finvarra, renowned in Dan, appears,
Whose fame, like a circling oak, grows wider with his years ;
And with them is O'Clery, from Kilbarron's castled steep,
Whose hearthstone covers the sea-bird's nest above the foamy deep.

IV.

And lo ! where comes McCurtin, sweet singer of the south,
And O'Broadin, with keen thoughts that swarm out of a honied
mouth ;
And O'Doran, Leinster's upright judge, and MacNeogh, of the
lays,
Whose tales can make December nights gayer than July days ;
And Nial Dol O'Higgin, whose words of power can drain
The life out of the heart he hates, and the reason from the brain ;
And Cymric bards from Cymric vales to the poet tryst have come,
And many a Scottish rhymmer from his Caledonian home.

V.

The Calvagh at the outer gate, he bids them welcome all,
The Brehon meets them at the door and leads them up the hall ;
The lady on the dais sits amid her rich awards,
Goblets and golden harps, and ancient books for studious bards ;
For them in the green meadow-lands a thousand horses feed,
And a golden bit and a gilded rein hangs in stall for every steed ;
And the glorions eyes of Irish girls are glancing 'round her too—
Guerdons for which the poet-soul its noblest deeds can do.

VI.

Over the fields of Erin war horns may blow to-day,
Many a man in tower and town may don his war array ;
The mountain tops of Erin red alarm fires may light,
But no foot shall leave that hall of peace for the track of blood
to-night ;

To-morrow, as to-day, shall rise in melody and peace,
The Mass be said, the cup be filled, nor the evening revels cease—
For Margaret, like Our Lady's self, unto the troubled land
Brings quiet in her holy smile, and healing in her hand.

VII.

It is not that her father is renowned thro' Innisfail;
It is not that her lord is hailed the sentinel of the Gael;
It is not that her daughter is the wife of O'Neil;
It is not that her first-born's name strikes terror through the vale;
It is not all her riches, but her virtues that I praise—
She made the bardic spirit strong to face the evil days;
To the princes of a feudal age she taught the might of love,
And her name, though woman's, shall be scrolled their warrior names
above.

VIII.

Low lie the oaks of Offaly, Rath Imayn is a wreck;
Fallen are the chiefs of Offaly—Death's yoke on every neck;
Da Sinchel's feast no more is held for holy in the land,
No queen—like Margaret—welcomes now the drooping bardic band;
No nights of minstrelsy are now like the Irish nights of old;
No septs of singers, such as then, M'Egan's book enrolled,
But the name of Margaret O'Carroll, who taught the might of love,
Shall shine in Ireland's annals even minstrel name above.

Margaret O'Carroll died in the year 1461, which, on that account, McFirbis calls "an ungracious and unglorious year." Death was caused by a cancer in her breast. "While the world lasts," says her admiring and faithful chronicler, "her very many gifts to the Irish and Scottish nations cannot be numbered. God's blessing, the blessing of all saints, and every our blessing from Jerusalem to Inis Gluair be on her going to Heaven, and blessed be he that will read and will hear this, for

the blessing her soule. Cursed be the sore in her breast that killed Margrett."

She had three children—two sons and a daughter—who did not leave any posterity.

"Finola, the daughter of Calvagh O'Connor Faly, and of Margaret, daughter of O'Carroll, who had been first married to O'Donnell, and afterwards to Hugh Boy O'Neill, the most beautiful and stately, the most renowned and illustrious woman of her time in all Ireland, her own mother only excepted, retired from this transitory world to prepare for life eternal, and assumed the yoke of piety and devotion in the monastery of Cill-achaidh, A.D. 1447."*

She lived in religious retirement for forty-five years, and died July 25th, 1493.

The two sons of Margaret O'Carroll were Felim and Teige. The former survived his mother but one day, and McFirbis thus records his death:—

"Felim, son to Calwagh O'Conner and to Margrett aforesaid, the only king's son that has got most ffaime, reputation and notable name, and that was most courageous that lived of the Lagenians in the latter ages, died, and there was but one night betwixt his and his mother's death. He died of the leprosy."

* "Annals of the Four Masters."

Teige, the second son, died of the plague in the year 1471.

Scant as are the foregoing details of the life and character of Margaret O'Carroll of Offally, they are yet sufficient to show that, instead of being the rude half-savage creature she is commonly represented to be, the Irishwoman of the Middle Ages was a high-bred and high-spirited gentlewoman.





THE OLD COUNTESS OF DESMOND.

BORN, A.D. 1464. DIED, 1604.

TWICE threescore years and ten—the allotted space of human life—passed over the head of the Lady Katherine, popularly known as the “Old Countess of Desmond,” before she yielded up her indomitable spirit. Not only her own generation and that which followed it did she see die out, but the next, and the next to this again, she saw arise, play out their parts in life, and disappear. Yet she lived on. A wife for half a century, she became a widow at threescore and ten; but, even at this latter period, only half of her pilgrimage was accomplished. The princely race from whom she sprang passed before her eyes through strange vicissitudes. For more than a century she beheld them in almost regal magnificence and power, swaying the councils of their sovereigns, and acting as their representatives at home and abroad; and she lived to see the chief of her house an outcast and a wanderer, with a price on his head, finally hunted down like a wild beast, and his seigniories gone for ever.

Lady Katherine Fitzgerald was born in the Castle of Dromana, in the third year of Edward IV., 1464. She was a Geraldine both on her father's and mother's side, being the daughter of Sir John Fitzgerald, Lord of Decies, and of Ellen his wife, daughter of the White Knight. In 1483 she married her kinsman, Thomas, third son of Thomas, eighth Earl of Desmond, and brother of James, the ninth Earl. The Duke of Gloucester, afterwards Richard III., was at her wedding, which took place in London, and danced with the bride, who always described him as being straight and well formed, instead of having the misshapen body which historians give him. Not long after her marriage, her husband's brother, James, the ninth Earl of Desmond, was basely murdered by his servant Shaun (John) Murtagh, at the instigation of another brother, John. The taint of blood was henceforth upon the race, and it never passed away. The murdered Earl was succeeded by his brother Maurice, who enjoyed the honours for three-and-thirty years. Earl Maurice died at Tralee in 1520, and was succeeded by his only son, James, who held the title for nine years. He died, leaving no male issue; and the honours, in consequence, devolved on the husband of the Lady Katherine, who became, in 1529, the twelfth Earl of Desmond.

At this time he was in his seventy-sixth year, and had acquired the sobriquet of *Maol*, or "The Bald." The countess was ten years his junior. They had one daughter, and there was also living a son of the Earl's by a former wife. This son died of the plague, just six months after his father succeeded to the earldom, and his remains were buried in the Franciscan priory at Youghal. The Earl of Desmond was a loyal subject of the English crown. When his young kinsman—the Geraldine "Silken Thomas"—in the Castle of Dublin, openly renounced his allegiance to the king, the Earl of Desmond was one of the first applied to "to catch the traitor." But shortly after the summons arrived he breathed his last in his castle at Youghal, and was buried with his father, under a stately tomb in the Franciscan Priory.

The widowed Lady Katherine was now in her seventieth year. Her jointure was the manor of Inchiquin, about five miles distant from Youghal, skirted by the sea on its eastern side. The river Finisk* ran through the estate, and on its margin, about four miles up from the ocean, was the Castle of Inchiquin, the ruins of which yet remain. It was circular, and must have been of prodigious strength; for the existing walls are no less than

* In Irish, "*Fionn-uisge*," the fair water.

twelve feet in thickness. The portion now standing is about thirty-five feet high, and thirty feet in diameter inside the walls. In this castle lived the old Countess of Desmond and her only daughter.

Immediately upon the death of her husband commenced the disastrous feuds which led to the ruin of the Geraldines. The rightful heir to the family honours was James FitzMaurice, the son of the Countess of Desmond's stepson, who had died of the plague. When the earldom became vacant by the death of his grandfather, James FitzMaurice was page to the king in England. Hurrying home to assume the family honours, he was murdered by his first cousin, John FitzJohn. Frightful scenes follow, but there is nothing recorded in the family history concerning the old Countess until we come to Garrett, the fifteenth Earl, in whom the power of the proud race of Desmond was extinguished. There is a deed preserved in the Exchequer, Dublin, in which the aged Countess assigns her castle to Garrett. What his motives in wishing to become possessed of it were we are left to conjecture. It is probable that, meditating an insurrection, he deemed it expedient to hold in his hands, or in the hands of his servants, every stronghold in the district.

Sir Walter Raleigh several times makes mention of "the Ladie Cattelyn," the name, doubtless, by

which she was known amongst her Irish followers, in whose vernacular "Kauthleen" was the right rendering of Katherine. In his "Historie of the World" he says :—

"I myself knew the old Countess of Desmond, of Inchiquin, in Munster, who lived in the year 1589, and many years since,* who was married in Edward the Fourth's time, and held her joynture from all the Earls of Desmond since then ; and that this is true all the noblemen and gentlemen of Munster can witness."

She is several times mentioned in the deeds concerning Sir Walter Raleigh's plantation of his estates in the south of Ireland. In a letter of his, addressed to the Queen in 1591, he says that all the neighbourhood of Youghal had been let out to English settlers, with a solitary exception :—
"There remaynes unto me but an old castle and demayne, which are yet in occupation of the old Countess of Desmond for her joynture."

But there were even darker days in store for the venerable noblewoman. Her lands were at length seized by the English settlers, her jointure was no longer paid, and she was reduced to the greatest poverty. All her remonstrances were set at

* "Since"—it should be remembered that Sir Walter Raleigh and other writers of his time used the word "since" in the same sense as we use "after."

nought. But, aged though she was, she summoned up all the spirit and fire of her race, and crossing the Channel in a sailing vessel which plied between Youghal and Bristol, she arrived one day at the latter city, in company with her daughter, determined to plead her cause with the king in person. The following account of the journey is taken from the Birch Collection in the Library of the British Museum. It is an extract from a "Table Book" of Robert Sydney, second Earl of Leicester, (Add. MSS. 4161), and runs thus:—

"The olde Countess of Desmond was a married woman in Edward IV.'s time, of England, and lived till towards the time of Queen Elizabeth, soe as she needes must be 140 yeares old ; she had a newe sett of teeth not long before her death, and might have lived much longer had she not mett with a kind of violent death ; for she must needes climb a nutt-tree to gather nutts, soe falling down she hurt her thigh, which brought a fever, and that fever brought death. This, my cosen Walter Fitzwilliam told me. This olde lady, Mr. Harnet told me, came to petition the Queen, and landing at Bristol, shee came on foote to London ; being then soe olde that her daughter was decrepit, and not able to come with her, but was brought in a little cart, their poverty not allowing them better provi-

sion of means. As I remember, Sir Walter Raleigh, in some part of his *History*, speaks of her, and says that he saw her anno 1589. Her death was as strange and remarkable as her long life was, having seene the deaths of soe many descended from her ; and bothe her own and her husband's house ruined in the rebellion and wars."

The foregoing account is slightly inaccurate, as it is well authenticated that it was to petition James I., and not Queen Elizabeth, the Countess of Desmond came to London. The king took pity upon her and relieved her necessities, but shortly after her return home she died, in the year 1604, and in the 140th year of her age. It is not certain where she was buried, but we may safely assume that it was in the Franciscan Priory at Youghal, where her husband had been interred seventy years previously.

In the life of Old Parr* the following passage occurs :—

Sir Walter Raleigh, a most learned knight,
Doth of an Irish Countess (Desmond) write,
Of sevenscore years of age, he with her spake.
The Lord St. Albans doth more mention make
That she was married in fourth Edward's reign,
Thrice shed her teeth, which three times came again.

In Lord Bacon's *History of Life and Death*, which

* "Harleian Miscellanies," vol. ii. p. 79.

was originally published in 1623—but which was written many years previous to that date—allusion is made to the venerable Countess:—

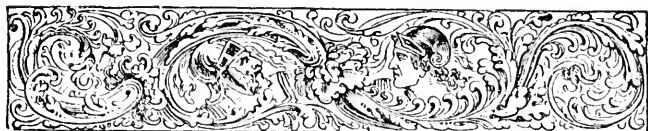
“The Irish, especially the wild Irish, even at this day, live very long. Certainly they report that within these few years the Countess of Desmond lived to a hundred and forty years of age, and bred teeth three times.”

When the Countess of Desmond came to London to petition King James her portrait was painted, and is now in the possession of Colonel Herbert of Muckross. It is done upon canvas, is oval, and about three feet long. She is represented as wearing a kind of hood, a lace collar, and her person is enveloped in a fur mantle. If she actually wore a lace collar—and that it has not been introduced by the painter for the sake of effect—it is a very good guarantee that her worldly circumstances must have greatly improved—lace at that period being almost priceless. In one of the portraits of Mary, Queen of Scots, she is painted as wearing a pair of lace ruffles which she had brought with her from France, and upon which Queen Elizabeth looked with envious eyes; for the latter possessed no lace, save a narrow piece of edging which had belonged to Catherine of Arragon, and which that Queen had brought from Spain.

The Countess of Desmond lived during the

reigns of Edward IV.—during whose reign she was married—of Edward V., Richard III., Henry VII., Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary and Elizabeth, and she died in the second year of the reign of James I.





THE FAIR GERALDINE.

BORN A.D. 1528.

GERALD, the ninth Earl of Kildare, seems to have been singularly fortunate in the choice of his two wives. He was first married to Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Louche, of Codnor, who is described as being “a woman of rare probity of mind, and every way commendable.” She bore him four daughters and one son, and then died suddenly at Lucan, county of Louth, A.D. 1517, and was buried with great solemnity near the Earl’s mother, in the monastery of Friars Observants, at Killucan.*

The Earl of Kildare was too great a power in the land not to have many enemies ; and the year following the death of his wife, he was falsely accused of maladministration. He wrote to the king (Henry VIII.) in his own defence, and at length went over to England to answer, in person, the charges made against him.

Whilst staying in London, waiting for the in-

* Ware’s “Annals.”

quiry into his conduct, he married his second wife, Lady Elizabeth Grey, fourth daughter of Thomas, Marquis of Dorset, and granddaughter of Elizabeth Woodville, Queen of Edward IV. By this marriage he gained much influence at Court, as the countess was first cousin to Henry VIII.* This marriage was a very happy one. Holinshed often speaks of Lady Elizabeth with much respect, and another chronicler says concerning her :—

“This noble man was so well affected to his wife, the Ladie Grey, as he woulde not at any time buy a sute of apparell for himself, but he would sute her with the same stuff. Whiche gentleness she recompensed with equal kindness ; for, after that he deceased in the Tower, she did not only ever after live as a chast and honourable widue, but also nightly, before she went to bed, she would resort to his picture, and there, with a solemn congée, she would bid her lorde good night. Whereby may be gathered with howe great love shee affected his person that had in such price his bare picture.”†

* Sir John Grey=Elizabeth Woodville=Edward IV.

Thomas, Marquis of Dorset.

Elizabeth=Henry VII.

Henry VIII.

Gerald, 9th Earl of Kildare=Elizabeth.

† Stanihurst.

The issue of this marriage was two sons and three daughters :

1. Gerald, eleventh Earl.
2. Edward, father of Gerald, fourteenth Earl.
1. Lady Margaret, born deaf and dumb, and died unmarried.
2. Lady Elizabeth.
3. Lady Cecily.

The subject of this brief sketch is the Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, the second daughter. She is best known as "The Fair Geraldine," under that name her beauty having been celebrated by the poets of her own and of later times. Born in Ireland in A.D. 1528, she was taken to England to be educated, that the jewel of her beauty might be polished and set off to advantage by the graces and accomplishments to be acquired in the atmosphere of a Court. She resided at Hunsdon, the seat of Lady (afterwards Queen) Mary, who was her mother's second cousin. At a very early age the Lady Mary appointed her young kinswoman one of her maids of honour, and it was about this time that she was seen by Henry, Earl of Surrey, the poet, soldier, and politician, who was so struck by her rare beauty that he wrote the following sonnet upon her :—

DESCRIPTION AND PRAISE OF GERALDINE.

From Tuscan came my lady's worthy race,
Fair Florence was sometime her ancient seat.
The western isle, whose pleasant shore doth face
Wild Camber's cliffs, did give her lively heat.
Fostered she was with milk of Irish breast;
Her sire an Earl, her dame of Princes' blood,
From tender years in Britain doth she rest,
With King's child; where she tasteth costly food.
Hunsdon did first present her to mine eyen;
Bright is her hue, and Geraldine she hight.
Hampton me taught to wish her first for mine,
And Windsor, alas! doth chase me from her sight.
Her beauty of kind; her virtues from above,
Happy is he that can attain her love.

It has been doubted whether the Lady Elizabeth or the Lady Cecily Fitzgerald were "The Fair Geraldine;" but the circumstance of Surrey seeing her first at Hunsdon, which was built by Henry the Eighth for educational purposes for his children, seems to settle the point, and to indicate that "The Fair Geraldine" was the Lady Elizabeth. There are the following reasons for supposing that it was the second daughter whose beauty was so celebrated. First, because Lady Mary Bryan, the governess of the king's children, mentions the Lady Elizabeth in a letter to Cromwell;* and, secondly, because no mention is ever

* Strype's "Ecclesiastical History."

made of the Lady Cecily having been attached to the Court.

“And Windsor, alas ! doth chase me from her sight,”

says Surrey, in his sonnet to “The Fair Geraldine,” referring to his incarceration in a tower in Windsor Castle, for the crime of eating flesh in Lent. Moreover, Lord Leonard Grey, uncle of the Fitzgeralds, was Deputy of Ireland for the Duke of Richmond, who was the intimate friend of Surrey. That connexion alone would account for the Earl’s acquaintance with a young lady, bred up with the Royal family.

“The Fair Geraldine” must have made more than a passing impression upon the heart of the courtly soldier ; for, later on, we hear of him at a tournament in Florence, defying the world to produce such beauty as hers. He was victorious, and the palm for beauty was unanimously awarded to the beautiful Irish maiden. Lord Surrey is also said to have visited, about the same time, Cornelius Agrippa, the celebrated alchemist, to try if he could look into the future, and tell him anything concerning the lady of his heart. History is silent as to whether or not the sage possessed (or professed to possess) the gift of prophecy, but it is recorded that, by means of a magic mirror, he revealed to Lord Surrey the form of the fair GERALDINE.

dine lying on a couch, reading one of his sonnets by the light of a taper. This incident has been introduced by Sir Walter Scott into his "Lay of the Last Minstrel":—

'Twas All Souls' Eve, and Surrey's heart beat high;
He heard the midnight bell with anxious start,
Which told the mystic hour approaching nigh,
When wise Cornelius promised, by his art,
To show to him the lady of his heart;
Albeit betwixt them roared the ocean grim;
Yet so the sage had hight to play his part,
That he should see her form in life and limb,
And mark, if still she loved, and still she thought of him.

Dark was the vaulted room of gramarye,
To which the wizard led the gallant knight,
Save that before a mirror huge and high
A hallowed taper shed a glimmering light
On mystic implements of magic might;
On cross, and character, and talisman
And almagest, and altar—nothing bright:
For fitful was the lustre, pale and wan,
As watchlight by the bed of some departing man.

But soon within that mirror, huge and high,
Was seen a self-emitted light to gleam,
And forms upon its breast the earl 'gan spy,
Cloudy and indistinct, as feverish dream;
Till slow arranging, and defined, they seem
To form a lordly and a lofty room,
Part lighted with a lamp with silver beam,
Placed by a couch of Agra's silken loom,
And part by moonshine pale, and part was hid in gloom.

Fair all the pageant—but how passing fair
The slender form which lay on couch of Ind!
O'er her white bosom strayed her hazel hair,
Pale her dear cheek, as if for love she pined;
All in her night-robe loose she lay reclined,

And, pensive, read from tablet eburnine
Some strain that seemed her inmost soul to find;
That favoured strain was Surrey's raptured line,
That fair and lovely form, the Lady Geraldine.

Slow rolled the clouds upon the lovely form,
And swept the goodly vision all away—
So royal envy rolled the murky storm
O'er my beloved Master's glorious day.
Thou jealous, ruthless tyrant!—Heaven repay
On thee, and on thy children's latest line,
The wild caprice of thy despotic sway,
The gory bridal-bed, the plundered shrine,
The murdered Surrey's blood—the tears of Geraldine!

“The Fair Geraldine” must have had many a young and gallant aspirant for her hand ; and it is almost with feelings of dismay and pity that we read that in 1543, when in but her sixteenth year, she married Sir Anthony Brown, K.G., who was then sixty years of age. He died in 1548, and the young widow shortly afterwards married the Earl of Lincoln. The Fair Geraldine left no posterity to inherit her beauty, and after this mention of her second marriage history is silent respecting her. She survived her second husband, and erected a monument to his memory in Saint George's Chapel, at Windsor. The Earl is represented in a suit of armour, and by his side is an effigy of “The Fair Geraldine,” the date of whose death is uncertain.



GRAINNE O'MAILLY.

LIVED DURING THE GREATER PART OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Dates Uncertain.



RAINNE O'MAILLY, or "Grace O'Malley" as she is more commonly called, has been the heroine of many a wild and romantic tale. In the Irish and English political ballads of the time she is frequently alluded to as "Grana Wail;" and traditional stories concerning her prowess are yet rife in the West of Ireland. But history says very little concerning her. In a letter written by John O'Donovan, during the period of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland—which document is now preserved in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, and bears the date July 17th, 1838—referring to the O'Malley family, he says .—

"The most celebrated personage of this family that ever lived was *Graina na g cearbhach*, or Grace of the Gamesters, Ny-Maillé, who flourished, according to tradition, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, by whom she was most graciously received.

. . . . She is now most vividly remembered by tradition, and people were living in the last generation who conversed with people who knew her personally. Charles Cormick, of Errus, now seventy-four years and six weeks old, saw and conversed with Elizabeth O'Donnell, of Newtown within the Mullet, who died about sixty-four years ago, and who had seen and intimately known a Mr. Walsh, who remembered *Graina na g cearbhach*. Walsh died at the age of 107, and his father was of the same age as Graine, and a foster-brother of hers."

But tradition is an "aëry record" by no means to be entirely disregarded ; and if we connect the various stories which are afloat concerning Grainne O'Mailly with even the slight documentary evidence which we possess, we may arrive at some conception of her character, circumstances, and mode of life.

Grainne O'Mailly is without a parallel in mediæval or modern times. She was a sea-queen : a remarkable product of a remarkable age. Call her a she-pirate if you will ; but was she more of a pirate than was Sir Francis Drake, or Sir Walter Raleigh, or his half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, all of whom were her contemporaries ? Elizabeth governed the British nation with the help of trusty counsellors and a well-digested code of

laws; whilst at the same time an Irish chieftainess away in the wilds of Connaught was, by the sheer force of her indomitable will, unaided by law or precedent, holding in subjection the fiercest and most lawless body of men in Ireland—the pirates of the Atlantic coast. The marvellousness of the extraordinary influence she must have gained over these men is all the more surprising, when it is taken into consideration that they were not only the most belligerent of all the Irish clans, but they did not suffer a woman even to inherit property, much less to take a leadership in the government. Therefore—as will be shown further on—Grainne O'Mailly had no right except that of might. “At once above, beneath her sex,” by both spear and spindle (her mother was also an O'Mailly), Grainne has been by some writers idealised, and represented as a beautiful and cultivated woman. But there are no authorities for such statements. That she was remarkable in appearance there can be no question. This may be gathered from the fact that her name, Grainne, does not mean “Grace,” as it has been commonly and erroneously Anglicised, but “The Ugly,” and her ugliness must have been remarkable to have gained for her the soubriquet. Moreover, in a traditional account of her, preserved in a manu-

script in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, the writer says :—

“She was a great pirate and plunderer from her youth. It is Transcended to us by Tradition that the very Day she was brought to bed of her first Child that a Turkish Corsair attacked her ships, and that they were Getting the Better of her Men she got up put the Quilt about her and a string about her neck took two Blunder Bushes in her hands came on Deck began damming and Capering about her monstrous size and odd figure surprised the Turks their officers gathered together talking of her this was what she wanted stretched both her hands fired the two Blunder Bushes at them and Destroyed the officers.”

It is, however, a well-authenticated fact that she was dark-complexioned, owing, doubtless, to an admixture of Spanish blood in her veins, for the Western Irish had large commercial dealings with the wine-trading Spaniards, and the two countries had widely intermarried with each other.

Restless and dark—its sharp and rapid look
Show'd a fierce spirit prone a wrong to feel,
And quicker to revenge it. As a book
That sunburnt brow did fearless thoughts reveal;
And in her girdle was a skeyne of steel.
Her crimson mantle her gold brooch did bind,
Her flowing garments reached unto her heel;
Her hair part fell in tresses unconfined,
And part a silver bodkin fastened up behind.

Grainne O'Mailly was the daughter of Owen O'Mailly, who was better known as *Dhubdara*—*i.e.*, “of the Black Oak.” He was Lord of O'Mailly's land, or *Ui-m-haille*, pronounced “Hoole,” or “Owle;” whence comes the corruption “Wail.” His territory comprised the present baronies of Murrisk and Borrischoole—*i.e.*, “The Borough of the O'Maillys.” As well as being the chief of this seacoast district he was also the Lord of the Isles of Arran, then inhabited by a singularly wild race, who were known as the most intrepid mariners along the Irish coast. Indeed, from the earliest ages the O'Mailly clan had been famed for sea-faring exploits. A bard of the fourteenth century says of them—

A good man never was there
Of the O'Mailly's but a mariner;
The prophets of the weather are ye,
A tribe of affection and brotherly love.

When Dubhdara O'Mailly died, his daughter Grainne was a girl of nineteen. She had been accustomed to accompany her father frequently when he went on his piratical expeditions, so that we may infer her knowledge of nautical matters was neither superficial nor theoretical, but thorough and practical. Dubhdara also left a son, who was much younger than Grainne, but who, by right, was the chief of

the clan. However, he was set aside by his intrepid sister, who assumed the command of the piratical squadron. She soon made herself notorious along the shores of Connemara,* where the deeply indented coast afforded safe harbours and hiding-places for her vessels when too closely driven upon the Atlantic. Her fame as a daring pirate and undisputed Queen of the Western wave soon spread abroad, and lawless and desperate characters from all parts came and enrolled themselves under her standard. At one time she could muster a flotilla formidable enough to deter the strongest coast lord in Ireland. It must not be supposed that her vessels were in any way resembling those of modern times. Wooden ships she certainly must have had, although of rude construction, but the bulk of her floating armament was composed of *coracles*, a sort of wickerwork boats covered with horse hide.† Her chief harbour was at Clare Island, in Newport Bay. Here her stronghold of Carrigahowly Castle was built at the very edge of the water, and her vessels being moored and tied together, it is said that the rope with which they were fastened was passed through a

* Connemara—i.e., *Anglicè*, “Bays of the Sea.”

† In the wilder parts of Connemara these boats are yet used by the peasantry.

hole in the castle wall, and that the courageous chieftainess slept with it wound around her arm, so as to be ready at once in case of any assault by night.

She constantly attacked and robbed the Spanish galleons, which, laden with Spanish wine, traded between Spain and Galway, where they exchanged their cargo for a homeward-bound one of salt. But her chief raids were against the vessels of the English Government. So notorious did she become, and so persistent was her persecution, that England at length proclaimed her an outlaw, and a reward of five hundred pounds—an enormous sum in those days—was offered for her capture. Moreover, the Anglo-Norman troops stationed at Galway were sent to besiege and take her castle of Carrigahowly. Grainne gave them battle, and after a fortnight's skirmishing they retired discomfited and defeated by the intrepid sea-queen.

Grainne O'Mailly was twice married. Her first husband was O'Donnell O'Flaherty, whose warlike character was indicated by his cognomen, *an chogaidh*—i.e., "of the wars." He was the chief of the O'Flaherty clan, but seems not to have played any important part in the history of the times. There is, however, a curious account of the duties rendered to him, which affords a good picture of the social laws of the period. His retainers always

paid rent in kind. From every quarter of a townland he received for the support of his household a certain amount of cattle, certain measures of oatmeal, called *sruhan*, with "sufficient butter;" and when his daughter married he could demand a two-year old heifer from every inhabited townland. O'Flaherty's residence was the extensive fortress of Bunowen, at the mouth of the river Owenmore. If the wife's clan was the most powerful in that part of the island, the husband's was the most dreaded. "The ferocious O'Flaherties" struck terror into the hearts of their enemies. When the thirteen Anglo-Norman tribes took possession of the city of Galway and the surrounding country, they inserted in their Litany the especial clause,—

"From the ferocious O'Flaherties,—Good Lord, deliver us!"

And the same words were inscribed, probably as a talisman, over the western gate of the city. O'Flaherty's territory was called *Baile-na-h-insi*, or "the Town of the Island." When he died—neither how, where, nor when is recorded—Grainne's troubles really began. It must be borne in mind that she governed the territory solely by the right of might, and upon her husband's death she inherited no property, for the native laws gave neither power nor inheritance to women. By her

marriage she had to some extent weaned herself from her followers, so that when she attempted to resume her former sway she found some difficulty in gathering together her retainers. She was literally without the means of living at this time, for with the death of her husband ceased all her rights to the *collop-na-sprea*, or dowry allowed to the wife of a chieftain, and which was usually paid in cattle. Therefore, for that reason she excused her piracies to the English Government, urging that her "thrade of maintenance"—*i.e.*, piracy, whereby she did "maintain herself and her people by sea and land for the space of forty (?) years," was perfectly justifiable, as she had no other provision.

Grainne O'Mailly took as her second husband a powerful Anglo-Norman chief, named Sir Richard Bourke, lord of the Mayo sept of this great Norman-Irish clan. Amongst his Irish retainers he was known by the name of MacWilliam Eughter—*i.e.*, "the lower," in contradistinction to the Earl of Clanrickarde, who governed "the upper" sept. Also, in accordance with the primitive Irish fashion of giving a person a nickname, he was called "Richard in Iron"—in allusion to the plate armour which he always wore.

Whether or not it were owing to the influence of her husband, it is impossible to say, but it is

certain that about this time—either shortly before or shortly after her marriage—Grainne O'Mailly, who had forfeited none of her independence by taking a husband, put herself under the protection of the English rule in Connaught. She was a powerful auxiliary in supporting the Saxon sway in the West ; and the Viceroy Sydney, referring to his visit to Galway in 1576, says :—

“ There came to me a most famous feminine sea-captain, called Grany-I-Mallye, and offered her service unto me, wheresoever I would command her, with three galleys and two hundred fighting men, either in Ireland or Scotland. She brought with her her husband, for she was, as well by sea as by land, more than master's mate with him. He was of the nether Bourkes, and now, as I hear, MacWilliam Euter, and called by the nickname, ‘ Richard in Iron.’ This was a notorious woman in all the coasts of Ireland. This woman did Sir Philip see and speak with : he can more at large inform you of her.”

The English found Grainne a powerful ally in consolidating their power along the Western shores of the island ; and it is but fair to add that they were generous enough to recognise this. But although the piratical chieftainess declared herself on the side of the English, yet she would not give up one tittle of her dignity. In 1593, her

troubles by sea and land increased and multiplied, and the politic Elizabeth having invited her to London to plead her cause in person, the Connaught princess accepted the invitation.

Tradition says that Grainne O'Mailly and her retinue performed the entire journey by sea, and sailed up the Thames to the Tower Gate. In this case tradition does not seem to be far wrong, for her little son, Theobald, or Toby, who was born during the journey, was called, *Tioboid-na-Lung*, or "Theobald of the Ship."

The meeting of the two royal ladies must have been a strange sight,—the light-haired, light-eyed, fair-faced, and rather shrewish-looking Elizabeth, and the swarthy, black-eyed, and black-haired Queen of Connaught. That the latter and her retainers were not attired in the then prevailing mode is pretty certain ; but it may also be positively stated that, whatever was the fashion of their habiliments, the texture and workmanship would have borne comparison with any to be found at the Court. For in Ireland, from the earliest ages, skilled needlework was held in the highest esteem.*

* The following extracts from the ancient Brehon Laws of Erin corroborate this statement :—

“ *The Fine for a Pledged Needle.*

“ A dairt (or yearling calf) worth four *screpalls* (of three pennies each) is what is paid as the fine of the needle, that is, of the *fine*

There are many traditional accounts of this memorable interview, but the chief and best result of it was that it consolidated the treaty already made between Grainne and Elizabeth. At the same time the Irish chieftainess—although expressing herself grateful for the protection afforded by the English Government—did not cede one inch of her royal dignity. The English Queen offered to create her a countess ; to which Grainne replied

needle. That is to say, a yearling calf to every woman whatever as the fine for her needle, except the embroideress, for as regards her, it is the value of an ounce of silver that shall be paid her as the fine for her needle, provided, however, that this may not be paid her except for the needle with which she works her ornamentation, that is, her embroidery.

“The lawful right of the pledged needle of an embroideress is laid down by the law. It is in ornamentation she is paid as far as the value of an ounce of silver, because every woman who is an embroideress is entitled to more profit than a queen.”

This is a remarkable instance of protection to skilled industry so many ages ago. The law protected rigorously all professional workers, and drew a wide line of demarcation between amateur embroideresses and those who worked for a living. There is also a very curious entry respecting some portions of the dress and ornaments of the women of ancient Erin, which indicates a peculiar and advanced state of civilisation. With reference to the contents of a queen's “work-bag,” the law says :—

“If it contains its legitimate property—namely, a veil of one colour, and a *mind*, or crown, of gold, and a land, or crescent, of gold and thread of silver. This then is the workbag of the wives of the kings, and when all these articles are in it, three cows (or six heifers) are its fine.

“The workbags of the wives of the noble (or lord) grades, that is, a workbag with its legitimate property of (silver) thread, with a veil,

that she could not do so, as they were both equal in rank. But she said she would accept a title for her little son Toby, who had been born on the passage from Ireland. Accordingly, the infant was brought into Court, and then and there created Viscount Mayo; from whom the present noble family of the Earls of Mayo is descended.

When the Irish chieftainess arrived at the English Court, she described herself as "Grainne O'Mailly, daughter of Doodarro O'Mailly, sometime chief of the country called Upper Owle O'Mailly, now called the Barony of Murasky." This state-

and with a diadem of gold, and a silk handkerchief, and if so, there are three heifers paid as its fine.

"If it be a bag without its legitimate property—namely, a veil, and silver thread, and a crescent of silver, and a diadem of gold; or what contains a painted mask, that is, what contains a painted face (or mask) for assemblies, namely, the banner or the handkerchief of silk, or the gold thread, that is, when it does not contain those things; and if those things were contained in it, three heifers would have been the lawful fine for it, but when those are not in it, it is double the value of everything which is in it, until it reaches the three heifers, and it goes no further."

According to the *Dinn-Seanchnas*, Saint Patrick kept three embroideresses constantly at work. These were *Lupait*, his own sister; *Ere*, the daughter of King Daire; and *Cruimthoris* of *Cenngoba*.

Maistin, the embroidress of *Aengus Mac Inog*, is celebrated as the first person who formed the figure of a cross in embroidery in Erin; on the breast-border of *Aengus's* tunic.

Saint Columb Cillé also had his special embroideresses, the chief of whom was *Ercnat*, the virgin nun, his cook and robemaker, who was embroidress, cutter, and sewer of clothes to Saint Columb Cillé and his disciples.

ment rather puzzled Elizabeth, who knew that Grainne was a married woman, until it was explained to her that it was customary amongst the Irish for the women to retain their maiden names after marriage.*

When Grainne was returning to Connaught, a storm came on, and her fleet was obliged to put in to Howth harbour. She landed, and advancing to the castle found the doors shut and the inmates at dinner. Being refused the hospitality she demanded for herself and her followers, she retraced her steps towards the shore. On her way she met a beautiful child playing in the grounds, and hearing he was the heir of Howth, Grainne deliberately stole him. She bore off her prize with her to Connaught, nor would she give him up until she stipulated for, and obtained as his ransom, the promise that for ever at meal-times the doors of the castle be thrown wide open, and hospitality extended to all wayfarers who should demand it. This custom is still observed there.

Grainne built and endowed a monastery on Clare Island, and there, tradition says, she was buried.

* The same custom prevails amongst the Irish peasantry to this day. It is no uncommon thing to hear them speak of "Margaret Dempsey, who is married to Pat Flanagan."

The chief authority for this statement is the curious old manuscript of the O'Mailly family before referred to, which says :—

“When *Grana-na-Garrugh* died, she was buried in Clear Island Abbey.”

The same document also mentions that “there is a grand tomb in the Abbey of Ballintobber Carra, where Tubboo (the son of Grana) was buried. The inscription was—Here Lies the Body of Sir Tubboo na Long Bourk first Lord Viscount (of Mayo) in which Tomb all his posterity was Buried, whereof Four were Lords and Earls.”*

Grainne O'Mailly was a she-pirate—there is no getting over that fact—but the state of the times in which she lived must be taken into consideration. Piracy was not considered the crime it was elevated into in later days, for the explorers of the New World were nothing more nor less than pirates. So that if the Irish sea-queen was also a sea-robber, it was less her fault than her misfortune to have been placed in circumstances such as to have obliged her to pursue this ignoble “thrade of maintenance,” as she herself so quaintly calls it. But, save her “thrade,” there is no other stain upon the character of Grainne O'Mailly. She was a truly virtuous woman, and it is recorded that her

* This MS. has no date.

horror of unchastity was such that she did her utmost to promote early marriages amongst her clan. Her good sense and wise judgment are most forcibly shown in her desire to work hand in hand with the Anglo-Norman settlers for the good of the country. Instead of weakly defying them, when she found their power was becoming pre-eminent, and thus keeping the land in a state of broil, and hindering progress, she founded and endowed religious houses, thus tacitly fostering religion and education ; she fought for the rights of her children whilst they were minors ; she made the best and most advantageous treaties she could with the powers that were, yet her good deeds seem always to be forgotten, and her least creditable traits of character remembered. Nevertheless, despite her marauding proclivities, Grainne O'Mailly as well as being a queen amongst her mariners, also stands forth as a queen amongst Irishwomen.





LETTICE, BARONESS OPHALY.

DIED, A.D. 1658.



DAUGHTER and heiress of the Geraldines, Lettice Digby, Baroness Ophaly, inherited the noble and fearless spirit of her race. She was granddaughter to Gerald, eleventh Earl of Kildare, and only daughter of Gerard, his eldest son, who died before his father. Created Baroness Ophaly, she was heir general to the house of Kildare, and inherited the barony of Geashill. She married Sir Robert Digby, of Coleshill, in the county of Warwick ; he died in 1618, leaving the Baroness a widow with seven children.

With this family she returned to Ireland, and lived in the castle of Geashill, in the Queen's County. Here she resided for many years, honoured and respected by all. Although a woman of brilliant talents, she was content to live quietly, performing the duties of mother to her children, and a kind and considerate mistress to her household and tenantry. This state of affairs continued until the year 1641, when the country

fell into a most disordered state. Civil war devastated the land, and when the rudeness of that most degraded period suggested the hope of finding an easy prey in the feebleness of an unprotected lady, her brutal assailants met with a resistance worthy of commemoration.

The rebels demanded admission to, and possession of, the castle of Geashill, a request which the Baroness stoutly refused. They then addressed the following letter to her:—"We, his Majesty's loyal subjects, at the present employed in his Highness's service, for the sacking of your castle, you are therefore to deliver unto us the free possession of your said castle, promising faithfully that your ladyship, together with the rest within your said castle *resiant*, shall have a reasonable composition; otherwise, upon the non-yielding of the castle, we do assure you that we will burn the whole town, kill all the Protestants, and spare neither man, woman, nor child, upon taking the castle by compulsion. Consider, madam, of this our offer; impute not the blame of your own folly unto us. Think not that here we brag. Your ladyship, upon submission, shall have safe convoy to secure you from the hands of your enemies, and to lead you whither you please. A speedy reply is desired with all expedition, and then we surcease." Here follow the signatures.

But her intrepid ladyship did not choose to surrender, and sent the following reply :—

“I received your letter, wherein you threaten to sack this my castle by his Majesty’s authority. I have ever been a loyal subject and a good neighbour among you, and therefore cannot but wonder at such an assault. I thank you for your offer of a convoy, wherein I hold little safety ; and therefore my resolution is, that, being free from offending his Majesty, or doing wrong to any of you, I will live and die innocently. I will do the best to defend my own, leaving the issue to God ; and though I have been, I still am desirous to avoid the shedding of Christian blood, yet, being provoked, your threats shall no way dismay me.”

But the rebels took no notice of this courageous letter, and Archdall says :—“After two months, the Lord Viscount Clanmalier brought a great piece of ordnance (to the making of which, as it was credibly reported, there went seven score pots and pans, which was cast three times by an Irishman from Athboy, before they brought it to that perfection in which it was at Geashill), and sent another summons to her ladyship.” In this letter her kinsman, Lewis Glanmaleroe (or Glanmalier)

peremptorily demands possession of her castle, offers the convoy proffered in the former epistle, and subscribes himself “your loving cousin.” But the dauntless spirit of Lettice Ophaly was not to be so easily quelled, and she returned the following answer :—

“MY LORD,—I little expected such a salute from a kinsman, whom I have ever respected, you being not ignorant of the great damages I have received from your followers of Glenmaleroe, so as you can’t but know in your own conscience that I am innocent of doing you any injury, unless you count it an injury for my people to bring back a small quantity of my own goods where they found them, and with them some others of such men as have done me all the injury they can devise, as may appear by their own letter. I was offered a convoy by those that formerly besieged me ; I hope you have more honour than to follow their example, by seeking her ruin that never wronged you. However, I am still of the same mind, and can think no place safer than my own house, wherein if I perish by your means, the guilt will light on you, and I doubt not but I shall receive a crown of martyrdom, dying innocently. God, I trust, will take a poor widow into His protection from

all those which without cause are risen up against me,

“ Your poor kinswoman,

“ LETTICE OPHALY.

“ P.S.—If the conference you desire do but concern the contents of this letter, I think this answer will give you full satisfaction, and I hope you will withdraw your hand, and show your power in more noble actions.”

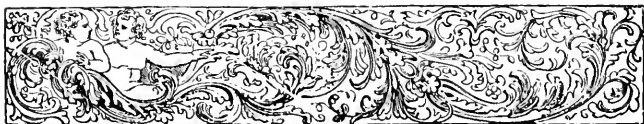
After his lordship had received this answer, he discharged the aforementioned piece of ordnance against the castle, which at the first shot burst and flew in pieces. However, the rebels with their muskets continued to fire upon the castle until the evening, when, still baffled, they retired, taking with them the broken cannon, but not before Lewis Glanmaleroe sent another and more peremptory letter to the Baroness, which she replied to in somewhat similar terms as to the former one.

The castle was many times attacked by the rebels—notably so by the Dempsies—and the Baroness Ophaly was often menaced ; but, notwithstanding all, she preserved the same firm and intrepid demeanour. She never surrendered one inch of her prerogative, but steadily maintained her ground until the rebellion had somewhat abated.

Then, in 1642, she was fetched off in safety by Sir Richard Greville.

Lettice, Baroness Ophaly, resided for the remainder of her life upon her late husband's property of Coleshill, in Warwickshire, where she died, A.D. 1658.





LA BELLE HAMILTON.

BORN, A.D. 1641. DIED, A.D. 1700.

THE grave Evelyn, in his Memoirs, describes the celebrated Mrs. Middleton, as a “famous, and, indeed, incomparable beauty;” and in the licentious and brilliant Court of Charles II., where lovely women were the rule and not the exception, she captivated the fascinating Count de Grammont. She was very poor, but anxious, according to one of her biographers, “to appear magnificently, and ambitious to vie with those of the greatest fortunes, though unable to support the expense.”

De Grammont knew of her impecunious condition, and tried to win her regard by the most costly presents. But Mrs. Middleton, although she graciously accepted the gifts, did not seem to encourage the giver. Naturally enough, he became piqued, and was beginning to transfer his affections from the rather affected Mrs. Middleton to Miss Warmestre, a lively girl, quite a contrast to his latest love, when, at this juncture, a new

face appeared upon the scene, and inspired him with the only honourable attachment he had ever felt.

The daughter of Sir George Hamilton, fourth son of James, Earl of Abercorn, and of Mary, granddaughter of Walter, eleventh Earl of Ormond, Elizabeth Hamilton, was just in her twentieth year when she first appeared at the Court of Charles II., and fascinated the Count de Grammont as much by her goodness and intellectual qualities as by her personal charms.

Samuel Pepys—who ought to be canonised under the name of “Saint Gossip”—leaves it upon record that at this period there were three distinct Courts held in London. A later writer, in mentioning them, thus characterises them:—“That at Whitehall, in the King’s apartments; that in the Queen’s, in the same palace; and that of Henrietta Maria, the Queen-Mother, as she was styled, at Somerset House. Charles’s was pre-eminent in immorality, and in the daily outrage of all decency; that of the unworthy widow of Charles I. was just bordering upon impropriety; that of Katherine of Braganza was still decorous, though not irreproachable.” Of the three Courts, that of Katherine was decidedly the most respectable, and so Pepys says. He seems rather to have admired this injured Queen, and says she had “a modest,

innocent look," although it is also left upon record that the first words she ever said in English were, "*You lie!*" She must have been of a gentle, uncomplaining nature; "for," says Pepys, "a pretty gentleman in our company confirms my Lady Castlemaine's being gone from Court, but knows not the reason. He told us of one wipe the Queene, a little while ago, did give her, when she came in and found the Queene under the dresser's hands, and had been so long. 'I wonder your Majesty,' says she, 'can have the patience to sit so long a-dressing?' 'I have so much need to use patience,' says the Queene, 'that I can very well bear with it.'"

De Grammont frequented the Court of Katherine of Braganza in preference to the other two, although Mrs. Middleton was seen more frequently at them than at the Queen's assemblies. The man had something very noble and disinterested in his nature, notwithstanding his follies and vices, and it is possible that he pitied the ill-used Queen. Certain it is that he invariably treated her with a respect not always accorded to her by her husband's associates; and it was whilst in attendance upon Katherine, one evening at a ball given by Mrs. Middleton, that he met "*La Belle Hamilton.*" He said he "had seen nothing at Court till this instant."

Sir Peter Lely was at that time painting the Beauties of the Court, and the portrait of Elizabeth Hamilton is one of the happiest efforts of his genius. He has depicted her with her rich dark hair,—of which a tendril or two fell upon her ivory forehead,—adorned at the back with large pearls, under which a gauze-like texture was gathered up, falling over the fair shoulders like a veil; a full corsage, bound by a light band either of ribbon or of gold lace, confining with a large jewel or button the sleeve on the shoulder, disguised somewhat the exquisite shape. A frill of cambric set off, whilst in whiteness it scarce rivalled, the shoulder and neck. “The mouth does not smile,” says De Grammont, “but seems ready to break out into a smile. Nothing is sleepy, but everything is soft, sweet, and innocent in that face so beautiful and so beloved.”

A connoisseur in female beauty, De Grammont had never seen any one who so fully came up to his standard as did Elizabeth Hamilton when he first beheld her. In his inimitable *Memoirs* he tells us that, “She was at the happy age when the charms of the fair sex begin to bloom; she had the finest shape, the loveliest neck, and the most beautiful arms in the world; she was majestic and graceful in all her movements, and she was the original after which all the ladies copied in their

taste and air of dress. Her forehead was open, white, and smooth ; her hair was well set, and fell with ease into that natural order which it is so difficult to imitate ; her complexion was possessed of a certain freshness, not to be equalled by borrowed colours ; her eyes were not large, but they were lively, and capable of expressing whatever she pleased."

But it was not alone her beauty which made an impression upon the brilliant De Grammont. Perhaps he was beginning to weary of mere external charms, for he speaks with quite as much enthusiasm of her intellectual charms as of those of her person.

"Her mind," he says, "was a proper companion for such a form: she did not endeavour to shine in conversation by those sprightly sallies which only puzzle, and with still greater care she avoided that affected solemnity in her discourses which produces stupidity ; but, without any eagerness to talk, she said just what she ought, and no more. She had an admirable discernment in distinguishing between solid and false wit ; and far from making an ostentatious display of her abilities, she was reserved, though very just in her decisions. Her sentiments were always noble, and even lofty to the highest extent when there was occasion ; nevertheless, she was less prepossessed with her own merit

than is usually the case with those who have so much. Formed as we have described, she could not fail of commanding love; but so far was she from courting it, that she was scrupulously nice with respect to those whose merit might entitle them to form any pretensions to her."

The King's brother James,—Duke of York, that profligate who aped the saint,—saw Miss Hamilton's picture in Sir Peter Lely's studio one day, and fell in love with it on the spot. He lost no time in paying court to the lovely original, but was repulsed by her coldness. So was Jermyn, and all the other gallants of the Court,—all, save the Count de Grammont. It is supposed that, at first, his proposals to her were not of an honourable nature: and it is certain that the lady, although so fascinated by the brilliant foreigner, would not listen to any others. At length they were formally engaged, and scarcely were all the attendant circumstances arranged when an incident occurred which very nearly separated them for ever:—

"Philibert De Grammont was recalled to France by Louis XIII. He forgot, Frenchman-like, all his engagements to Miss Hamilton, and hurried off. He had reached Dover, when her two brothers rode up after him.

"'Chevalier de Grammont,' they said, 'have you forgotten nothing in London?'

“‘I beg your pardon,’ he answered, ‘I forgot to marry your sister.’”

It is said that this story suggested to Molière the idea of *Le Mariage forcé*.

For six years the marriage of De Grammont and La Belle Hamilton was in contemplation only. That she loved him ardently and deeply there can be no doubt, and never swerved from her loyalty to him, notwithstanding all the temptations of that gay and licentious Court. Her own family were at first very much opposed to the marriage, for De Grammont was a man without either fortune or character; an exile from his own country, and whose chief mode of livelihood was dependent upon the gaming-table. After a time Charles II. settled upon him an annual sum of 1500 Jacobuses, so that in the end it was not poverty which hindered him from fulfilling his engagement. The real truth seems to have been that De Grammont was too useful to the King in helping to pandar to his pleasures; and Charles probably feared the pure influence of Elizabeth Hamilton over his boon companion.

However, at length they were married, and in 1669, La Belle Hamilton, as she was still called, after giving birth to a child, went to reside in France. The French women did not like her, for she certainly had too much virtue, and perhaps too

much beauty for the Parisian ladies to admire her. She was appointed *Dame de Palais* at Versailles, but her career in the French Court was less brilliant than in England.

She loved her libertine husband devotedly, and did her best to reclaim him. In the year 1696, De Grammont fell dangerously ill, and his wife tried to draw his attention to a sense of his danger. Louis XIV. sent the Marquis de Dangeau to convert him, and to talk to him on a subject little thought of by De Grammont—the world to come. “Hereupon Count de Grammont, turning towards his wife, who had ever been a very devout lady, told her, ‘Countess, if you don’t look to it, Dangeau will juggle you out of my conversion.’” He died at the age of eighty-six.

One of the most beautiful women of her age; full of wit and animal spirits—as maiden and wife, not a breath of scandal rests upon the fair name of Elizabeth Hamilton, Countess de Grammont. She emerged unscathed from the trying ordeal of the temptations and seductions of the two most profligate Courts in the world; a noble example of womanly rectitude.

PART III.



FAMOUS ACTRESSES.



MARGARET WOFFINGTON.

BORN, OCTOBER 18TH, 1720. DIED, MARCH 28TH, 1760.

WHAT is virtue?" asked a young lady one day of a world-worn cynic. To which he promptly replied, "Not being found out, my dear!" How many lives of women who have been courted and caressed, who have been the idols of their age; surrounded by the intoxicating homage which men are ever ready to yield to wit, genius, and beauty, when they find all these attributes centred in a woman—how many such lives would bear the stern scrutiny to which the asceticism of those who have never been tempted, would submit them? Certainly, not the life of Peg Woffington. There is much concerning her to condemn, but there is also much to praise: much to mourn over, but much to be proud of. In attempting to delineate the character of such a woman as she was, it should be borne in mind that her susceptible Celtic temperament, and her fiery Irish blood, often involved her in broils which she

deeply regretted. She was perpetually inviting people to stand upon the tail of her coat, and when they complied with her request, she resented it as an insult. Moreover, she had no advantages of early and delicate culture, no moral training in the dawn of life, when impressions whether for good or evil are readily and indelibly stamped upon the character. It is a well-established fact that Peg Woffington lived to become fully sensible of her errors; and she sincerely repented and mourned over them. Why, then, should the untaught, fatherless Irish girl be denied the credit so often accorded to aristocratic Magdalens—take La Valérie, for example—who had infinitely far less excuse for their frailties? “Forgive her one female error, and it might fairly be said of her, that she was adorned with every virtue; honour, truth, benevolence, and charity were her distinguishing qualities.”*

On the 18th of October, 1720, Margaret Woffington was born in George’s Court, a miserable slum of the City of Dublin. Her father was John Woffington, an honest bricklayer, who died when Peggy was about five years old. The poor mother was thus left with two children, and no means of supporting them. Young as Peg was, she was

* *Vide* Arthur Murphy’s “Life of Garrick.”

obliged to do something for her living ; and as the inhabitants of Dublin who lived near the river were obliged to have their water supply brought from the Liffey, little Peggy worked for her daily bread as a water-carrier.

About this time, a French dancer, calling herself Madame Violante, came to Dublin. She brought with her a number of acrobats and rope-dancers ; and such an exhibition being the first of the kind that had ever been seen in that city, it naturally attracted much attention. Her entertainment was given in a large house in Fownes' Street, once the residence of Lord Chief Justice Whitchell. At the back of this house was a large piece of waste ground, which reached away to the rear of the Crow Street Theatre ; then the most fashionable play-house in Dublin. After a time, the novelty of her acrobats and dancers began to pall upon her audience ; and Madame Violante cast about in her mind for some fresh species of entertainment. She had often been struck with the sprightliness, beauty, and grace of the Irish children, and it occurred to her that a play, in which children should alone be the performers, could not fail to be attractive from the very originality of the idea.

Madame Violante was ambitious in her selection of a piece. "The Beggar's Opera" was then in

the full swing of its popularity. *Polly Peachum* and *Captain Macheath* had become household words, and the enterprising Frenchwoman, having trained a number of children, brought out this first of the comic operas in a booth erected on the waste ground at the back of the Fownes' Street house. Little Peggy Woffington, not then quite ten years old, played the chief female part ; and from the *Polly Peachum* of the booth in Fownes' Street, sprung the beautiful, witty, and captivating actress, who bewitched Garrick and Sheridan ; foiled the sarcastic Quin with his own weapons ; scolded and swore at both pit and gallery when they did not please her ; and who sat down and cried because she had not as fine a dress as Mrs. Bellamy's.

The children were well selected. There is an old playbill extant, in which their names are given, and we find that all those who personated the chief characters afterwards became distinguished actors and actresses. The cast was as follows :—

Polly Peachum	...	...	Miss MARGARET WOFFINGTON.
Captain Macheath	...	...	Miss BETTY BARNES.
Lockit	...	...	Master BEAMISH.
Lucy	...	...	Miss RUTH JENKS.
Mrs. Peachum	...	...	Miss MACKAY.
Filch	...	...	Master BARRINGTON.

The latter became one of the best low comedians of his day.

Amongst the valuable collection of broadsides in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, there is preserved the following *Epilogue*. The date would relegate it to the period when the juvenile *Polly Peachum* was in the zenith of her popularity, and it is not improbable that it was spoken by her. Moreover, the same broadside contains three songs, several of which bear internal evidence that the "Polley" by whom they were sung must have been very young. She called herself a "*little satyr*," and again says, "Your Polley raises her artless voice." The following is a fac-simile of the *Epilogue* :—

THE NEW

EPILOGUE

Spoke and Sung by Polley Peachum at her Benefit.

PLAY :—THE WAY OF THE WORLD.

A Play with scarce a *Song*—'Tis gross Offence,
 How! Please an Audience so polite—with Sense;
 Prodigious! thus so many hours to sit
 Squeezed up and mortified with *Congreve's* wit:
 Ladies and Beaux, I own 'tis wond'rous hard
 To be so long from *dear Quadrille* debar'd.
 Poor DUBLIN—how thou'rt over-run with Folly,
 Cards, Scandal, Beggar's Opera and Polley!
 Toys to kill Time, and scape the Plague of Thinking,
 O Wonderful *alacrity* in *Sinking*.

But yet for once—tho' much 'tis out of Season,
 Deign to excuse the Impertinence of Reason—

Fear not your OPERA shall again delight ye,
And to the *hundredth Night* we will invite ye.
Again the Newgate-Nymphs, in Rival Strains,
Shall melt your Hearts for brave *Macheath* in Chains;
The *Party-Colour'd-Gentry* yet shall roar,
And the Pit echo with a loud *Encore*;
The Gallery-Dames behold their lov'd Grimace
And the great Tyburn-Hero's rueful Face,
But to dismiss ye now without a SONG—
"Twere barbarous indeed—for some may long,
But *Raillery* apart—Perhaps you'll say,
Well may She sing, when We the Piper pay.

The novelty of the conception attracted much attention, and everybody flocked to see the wonderful children. Other plays and farces were acted, and for a time all went merry as a marriage bell. Peg Woffington's mother used to sell oranges to the theatre-goers at the entrance to Fownes' Court, where, when the performance was over, her lovely daughter used to join her, and help to carry home the empty baskets and any that remained of the stock-in-trade.

But a rival theatre was opened in Smock Alley,* and the performances in the Fownes' Street booth failed to attract the audiences they had hitherto done. Madame Violante held out as long as she could, but at length was obliged to let the booth to some of her former pupils for the sum of three pounds a week. They were in hopes of retrieving its failing fortunes, but finally they were obliged

* A Roman Catholic chapel now occupies the site of this theatre.

to abandon the scheme, and in 1735 Madame Violante's dancing booth, the nursery of some of the first performers who have ever trod the boards, was closed for ever.

Peg Woffington was now about sixteen, and her performances had attracted no small amount of attention. She had no difficulty in procuring an engagement in the new theatre in Smock Alley, where she used to dance between the acts. But the young Irish girl was ambitious. She wanted to do something more than dance, and earnestly begged to be given a part, no matter how small. Her request was scornfully rejected, and poor Peggy was told—and this even in the Irish capital—that because of her dissonant voice and very pronounced brogue, she would never be an actress. Deeply mortified, she was thinking of quitting the profession, when a fortuitous circumstance turned the scales in her favour.

A favourite actress, who had been duly announced to play the part of *Ophelia*, was suddenly incapacitated from doing so. At the eleventh hour the part was offered to Peg Woffington, who had never played a serious character in her life. With true Irish audacity she accepted the character, and on February 12th, 1736, made her bow before a Dublin audience in that most subtle and sensuous of Shakspeare's female creations.

So Peg Woffington played *Ophelia*, and played it well too, notwithstanding the disadvantage of being attired in an ill-fitting black velvet gown and spangles. It was the grandest gown in the theatrical wardrobe, and the lively Peggy was wont to say, many a day after, that when she put it on she "*felt Ophelia all over.*" But although her rendering of the part gave universal satisfaction, and greatly enhanced her popularity, yet her crowning triumph was still to come.

In appearance Peg Woffington was above the middle height, her figure was perfect, and her complexion of a dazzling fairness. She had an abundance of the true blue-black Irish hair, large black eyes, with long lashes and exquisitely pencilled eyebrows. So Hogarth paints "*The Woffington,*" lying on a couch, "*dallying and dangerous.*"* She was never seen to such advantage as in playing male characters, and her impersonation of *Sir Harry Wildair*, in "*The Constant Couple,*" at once compelled the public to acknowledge her as *facile princeps* in her art. It was in the beginning of April, 1740, that she first appeared in this, which was ever after her favourite character. She was just twenty, in the first flush of her youth and beauty, and completely turned the heads of

* This picture hangs in the Garrick Club.

Dublin's proverbially play-loving population. The papers were enthusiastic in their praises of her, and the morning after her first impersonation of *Sir Harry Wildair* the following lines appeared in one of them :—

Peggy—the darling of the men,
In *Polly*, won each heart;
But now she captivates again,
And all must feel the smart.

Her charms, resistless, conquer all,
Both sexes vanquished lie,
And who to *Polly* scorned to fall,
By *Wildair* ravished lie.

Would lavish Nature, who her gave
This double power to please,
In pity give her both to save,
A double power to ease.

The following story concerning her first visit to London reads more like romance than plain matter-of-fact; but then from beginning to end her career was full of romance. The narrative runs thus :—

“At this epoch, with professional fame and fortune in her grasp, she left the stage suddenly, and went to England with an admirer whose addresses she had for some time received with favour, and who beguiled her from Dublin by talking of marriage while engaged from mercenary views to another. She discovered his perfidy, and played off a fair counterstroke in return. Habited

as an officer, and attended by a male servant, she went down to the country to the lady's residence, a few days before the intended marriage. A public ball was given by some of the family to celebrate the approaching event. To this she obtained an invitation, and so disguised herself by painting eyebrows, moustache, &c., and by using other theatrical arts, that she escaped discovery even by her faithless friend. She watched an opportunity, had the address to engage the bride-elect to walk a minuet with her, and also to become her partner for the remainder of the evening. She then took an opportunity of discovering the real character of the lover, and showed some of his letters, containing protestations of eternal fidelity to Peg Woffington, an actress. The traitor's match was broken off, and his mistress dismissed him in scorn. Some accounts add that the disappointed bride fell in love with the dashing young militaire, and would have married him on the spot to complete her revenge."

Deserted by her faithless swain, Peg Woffington found herself alone in London, with only her own ready wit to rely upon as a means of procuring a livelihood. She accordingly sought out the renowned John Rich, the patentee and manager of Covent Garden Theatre, the inventor and emperor of pantomimes. No less than eighteen visits

did she pay to his sanctum without being able to gain admittance. On the nineteenth, the irascible Irishwoman exclaimed to the footman, "Go and tell your master my name is Woffington, that I came to ask for an engagement, and shall come no more."

The footman obeyed.

"Is she an Irishwoman?" inquired the lazy Rich, with some show of animation.

"She talks like a furriner, sir," was the reply.

"What is she like?"

"More like a hangel than any woman as ever I seed!" exclaimed the Cerberus enthusiastically.

"Then show her up, by all means," decided the manager; and in few moments Peg Woffington, radiant in her youth and beauty, and with a glow of indignation yet mantling upon her fair cheek, stood in the Presence.

She found Rich lolling on a sofa, with a play-book in one hand and a china cup in the other, from which he sipped his tea. Around and about him were seven-and-twenty cats, of different sizes, at play—toms and tabbies, brindles and tortoiseshells, white, black, and red; some staring and solemnly winking at him, some eating the toast out of his mouth, some licking milk from a saucer, some frisking, others demurely seated on the floor,

and others perched on his shoulders, arms, knees, and even on his head. A grimalkin instead of a laurel-wreath formed a more suitable crown for the genius of pantomime.

The result of the interview was that Rich engaged the Irish actress in spite of her brogue. From a MS. playbill* we learn that on November 6th, 1740, would be performed "The Recruiting Officer"—*Sylvia*, "Miss Woffington, her first appearance in England." She was most enthusiastically received, and repeated the character several times during the same month. It is significant that on the second evening of her performance in London she assumed the title of *Mrs.*, which she ever after retained. There is no clue of any kind as to her reason for so doing, but it is probable she may have thought it added to her independence and importance.

Mrs. Woffington next played *Sir Harry Wildair*—her favourite character. Her success in this part in London was even greater than it had been in Dublin. It was then, and for long afterwards, the custom to change the play nearly every night; but so great was the excitement occasioned by the advent of this new actress, that she played *Sir Harry Wildair* for twenty consecutive nights.

* In British Museum Library.

Moreover, she achieved even a greater triumph. Hitherto, Wilkes had been considered as the model for *Sir Harry Wildair*; but the originality of Mrs. Woffington's impersonation took the audience by storm. They were perfectly electrified to find the dashing, high-bred rake acted by a woman; and with so much ease, elegance, and propriety of demeanour, such lightness and freedom of action, and with a total absence of all feminine restraint.

At this period the green-room of Covent Garden Theatre must have been an amusing place wherein to spend half an hour. There was the gentle and humorous Garrick, who appreciated wit but was never ready with an answer; there was his tormentor, sharp-tongued Kitty Clive; the cynical Quin; the foolish and somewhat stupid Susannah Cibber; and last, though not least, "that audacious Irishwoman," Margaret Woffington. The latter and Kitty Clive hated one another cordially, and lost no opportunity of saying spiteful things of each other. "A pretty face," said Kitty Clive to Mrs. Woffington, "of course excuses a multiplication of lovers!" "And a plain one," retorted the witty Woffington, "insures a vast overflow of unmarketable virtue!" On one occasion, after having been more enthusiastically applauded than usual in her character of *Sir Harry Wildair*, Mrs. Wof-

fington rushed excitedly into the green-room, and exclaimed in great glee—

“Mr. Quin! Mr. Quin! I really believe half the house take me for a man!”

“The other half know the contrary, madame,” replied the cynical Quin.

Instead of being offended she laughed heartily, and with infinite zest used to repeat the joke against herself.

Still keeping to the MS. playbills, we find that during the season of 1741–42 Mrs. Woffington had accepted an engagement with Flectwood, the manager of Drury Lane Theatre. Here she considerably added to her stock of characters. She played *Sylvia*, *Sir Harry Wildair*, *Rosalind* in “As You Like it,” and *Ruth*, in the now but little known play of “The Committee.” She added to her list *Lady Brute*, *Berinthia* in “The Relapse,” *Mrs. Sullen Belinda* in “The Man of Mode,” and *Lady Betty Modish* in “The Careless Husband,” a character for which she was afterwards celebrated. Also she played during this engagement *Cordelia* to Garrick’s *Lear*, and was announced for *Helena* in “All’s Well that Ends Well,” but was taken suddenly ill, and fainted away as she stood at the wing ready to go on.

Before the season was half over Mrs. Woffington had become the fashion. All the women were

jealous of her, and all the men were madly in love with her.* Garrick was her devoted slave. He wrote the song of "Lovely Peggy" in token of his adoration, and a poor token it is. At least the verses are usually attributed to "the ingenious Mr. Garrick," but some recent research throws rather a doubt upon the accuracy of the statement, for amongst Sir C. H. Williams's papers a copy of them was found; and it is also worthy of note that they are not included in the volume of his own poems which Garrick carefully prepared for the press. However, as no notice of Mrs. Woffington could be considered complete without them, here they are.

TO LOVELY PEGGY.

Once more I'll tune the vocal shell,
To hills and dales my passion tell,
A flame which time can never quell,
That burns for thee, my Peggy!

Yet greater bards the lyre shall hit,
Or say what subject is more fit,
Than to record the sparkling wit
And bloom of lovely Peggy.

The sun first rising in the morn
That paints the dew-bespangled lawn,
Does not so much the day adorn
As does my lovely Peggy.

* "So you cannot bear Mrs. Woffington, yet all the town is in love with her. To say the truth, I am glad to find somebody to keep me in countenance, for I think she is an impudent Irish-faced girl."—*Horace Walpole's Letters*.

And when in Thetis' lap to rest
He streaks with gold the ruddy West,
She's not so beauteous as, undrest,
Appears my lovely Peggy.

* * * * *

While bees from flower to flower shall rove,
And linnets warble through the grove,
Or stately swans the river love,
So long shall I love P'eggy.

And when Death with his pointed dart
Shall strike the blow that rives my heart,
My words shall be, when I depart,
Adieu, my lovely Peggy!

The now generally reputed author of these verses, Sir C. Hanbury Williams, was at this time Garrick's rival in Mrs. Woffington's affections. They wooed her each after his own fashion—the former in the style of the “man of parts” of the day—coarse, unfeeling, and ungentlemanly. Garrick was more serious in his love-making. He tried to touch her mind as well as her heart, for he saw that beneath all her irregularities of conduct there lay a noble nature. There is no doubt but that he wished to marry the fascinating actress. Whenever he attempted to speak seriously to her upon the subject she always had some excuse ready, and put off the conversation to a more convenient season, which never came. Mrs. Woffington is usually described as a vain, flighty, and vacillating person, and her behaviour in keeping Garrick

hanging about her for so many years has been severely censured. There are more aspects than one in which her conduct in this matter may be viewed. She was a woman of a very loving nature; many of her actions prove this, and it is quite possible that the early attachment to which allusion has been made may have exerted its influence over her life. Until after she had been deserted by her faithless lover, there had not been a blemish upon her character; but thrown upon her own resources in London—friendless, betrayed, her love and her pride alike outraged—it is then we hear of her becoming reckless, first taking up with one lover, then with another, to one constant never.* Garriek, the only one who seemed to recognise the higher nature in the witty actress, certainly seems to have been the only one whom she ever seriously thought of marrying.

It is very much to Peg Woffington's credit that, no sooner was she able to do so, than she at once placed her mother in a comfortable position and beyond the cares of poverty for the remainder of her life. For many years the old woman might have been seen going about in Dublin, from one Roman

* "Somebody asked me at the play the other night, what was become of Mrs. Woffington. I replied, 'She is taken off by Colonel Cæsar.' Lord Tyravley said, 'I suppose she was reduced to *aut Cæsar aut nullus*.'"—II. *Walpole's Letters*, 1747.

Catholic chapel to the other, attired in a large black velvet mantle, and carrying a gold snuff-box. Neither did the actress neglect her sister. At an early age she removed her from her low surroundings in Dublin, and placed her at school in a French convent. It is possible that Peg herself felt the want of a good education, and was therefore determined that her sister should have every advantage.

In the summer of 1742, being then in her twenty-third year, Mrs. Woffington, in company with Garrick, returned to Dublin. Here she acted with him in all her favourite characters. The Garrick and Woffington fever was now at its height. The enthusiasm of the citizens of Dublin knew no bounds. The new character, which chiefly charmed them, was her rendering of *Lady Betty Modish*. It pleased and amazed them to see the airs and affectations of a town madam so aptly portrayed by the *ci-devant* little water-carrier of the Liffey. Garrick used to say that he owed a great deal of his popularity on this, his first visit to Dublin, to Mrs. Woffington. She helped him to understand the Irish character, and the great actor, who had too much good sense and genius not to take her advice, shaped his course accordingly. An amusing incident occurred during their stay in Dublin. All her suitors were jealous of Garrick, especially

a noble lord who chanced to be her particular friend at the time. Garrick called to see her one day, and, as was then the custom, he had his head shaved and wore a wig. This he took off to cool his head, and forgot all about it. In the midst of their interview Lord —— was announced. He was a great patron of the drama, and as neither Peg nor Garrick could afford to offend so powerful a person, the actor quickly concealed himself to avoid increasing the visitor's jealousy. But upon the table, right before his lordship, lay the fatal wig! He at once recognised it to be that of Garrick, and stormed and swore at Peggy, who calmly listened to him, and when he had finished broke out into an immoderate fit of laughter. "Yes, my lord," she exclaimed, "it is certainly Mr. Garrick's wig; and as I am learning a breeches-part he was good enough to lend it to me; so never let me hear you talk such jealous nonsense again!" The enamoured nobleman believed her; and thus her ready wit saved both herself and Garrick for that time.

Notwithstanding her "deplorable tragedy voice," as the *Dramatic Censor* of the day says, Mrs. Woffington continued to win fresh laurels by her rendering of a series of Shakspearian characters. Garrick used to say he liked her best as *Ophelia*, and considered that she helped him to carry out

his conception of *Hamlet* better than any other actress had ever done. But she chiefly excelled in male parts; they showed off to advantage her splendid figure and dashing air. She undoubtedly must have possessed wonderful powers of fascination to have in any way pleased her audience in her representation of female characters, for all the dramatic critics of that period are unanimous in saying that her voice was harsh and unpleasing. When she appeared as *Calista*, in "The Fair Penitent," the following critique appeared in the *Dramatic Censor* of that week :—

"Mrs. Woffington, through an unaccountable turn of public caprice, was very well received in *Calista*, though all her merit was comprehended in elegance of figure; she was a *Lady Townly* in heroics, and barked out the penitent with as dissonant notes of voice as ever offended a critical ear. We allow she was very pleasing to the eye, but highly offensive to cultivated taste."*

We have no critique upon her *Ophelia*, but, notwithstanding her dissonant voice, she must have been a powerful attraction, for in the manuscript playbills of the period—which have been largely consulted—we find her over and over again announced for sentimental female characters. The

* *Vide Dramatic Censor*, vol. i. p. 275.

contemporary dramatic criticisms have been carefully collated in conjunction with these announcements, and it is very remarkable that in scarcely any instance are they favourable to the actress, and they do not contain one word of flattery.

“We never could admire Mrs. Woffington’s croaking of this part,” says one of her critics, when she played *Aspasia* in “*Tamerlane*,” “’tis true she figured it so elegantly, that her first appearance prejudiced spectators in her favour; but harmony of person was greatly injured by dissonance of voice.”

The same critic* observes of her *Lady Randolph*,—“Mrs. Woffington, whose tragic utterance was, in general, the bane of tender ears, never appeared to less advantage than in *Lady Randolph*; flat in the calm, and dissonant in the impassioned passages.”†

Upon their return to London, in 1743, Mrs. Woffington and Garrick were engaged at Drury Lane Theatre. They openly lived together, and paid the household expenses week about. Their friends used to say that the hospitality was more lavish and open-handed during Peg’s week—a not unlikely thing, as Garrick’s parsimony was pro-

* Francis Gentleman, a native of Dublin.

† *Vide Dramatic Censor*, vol. ii. p. 109.

verbial. She delighted in having a host of people at her table. Of course, her erratic style of life necessarily shut her out from female society; but she did not care much for that; she liked the society of men very much better, and she said so too. Even Doctor Johnson acknowledged her seductive manners, and honestly avowed that he was afraid of them. Another elderly gentleman—Owen McSwiny—was her devoted admirer for years, and at his death left her a substantial token of his admiration, in the shape of 200*l.* a year for her life. This gentleman is referred to in the following letter—the only one of Mrs. Woffington's which is extant. It is addressed to “Master Thomas Robinson.”

“MY PRETTY LITTLE OROONOKO

“I'm glad to hear of y^r safe arrival in Sussex, & that you are so well placed in the noble family of Richm^d &c., for w^{ch} I have y^e most profound regard and respect.

“Sir Thomas Robinson wrote me word y^t you are very pretty, which has raised my curiosity to a great pitch, & it makes me long to see you.

“I hear the acting poetaster is wth you still, at Goodwood, and has had the insolence to brag of favours from me; vain Coxcomb!

“I did, indeed, by the persuasion of Mr. Swiny

and his assistance answer the simpleton's nauseous lett^r—foh!

“He did well, truly, to throw my lett^{rs} into the fire, otherwise it must have made him appear more ridiculous than his armour at Bath did, or his cudgel playing with y^e rough Irish man.

“Saucy Jackanapes! to give it for a reason for the burning my letter, that there were expressions too tender & too passionate in it to be shown.

“I did in an ironical way (which the booby took in a literal sense), compliment both myself & him, on the success we shared mutually, on his first appearance on y^e stage, and that which he had (all to himselfe) in the part of Carlos in *Love makes a Man*; when with an undaunted modesty he withstood the attacks of his foes armed with catt-calls and other offensive weapons.

“I did, indeed, give him a little double meaning touch, on the expressive and graceful motion of his hands and arms, as assistants to his energick way of delivering y^o poets sentiment^s, & w^{ch} he must have learned from y^e youthful manner of spreading plaisters when he was apprentice.

“These, these I say, were the true motives to his burning the Lett^r, and no passionate expressions of mine.

“I play the part of S^r Harry Wildair to-night, & can't recollect w^t I said to the impertinent

monster in my lett^r, nor have I time to say any more now, but y^t you shall hear from me by the next post, & if Swiny has a copy of it or I can recover the chief articles in it, you shall have em.

“I am (my D^r Black boy)

“With my duty to their Graces,

“Y^r admirer & humble serv^t,

“MARGARET WOFFINGTON.

“Saturday, X^{br} 18th 1743.

(*Endorsement.*)

For

Master Thomas Robinson

At Goodwood

in

Sussex.”

The foregoing is a characteristic letter, not alone because of the sly, satirical touches with which it abounds, but as an instance of the pains which little ignorant Peg Woffington, the Irish bricklayer's daughter, must have taken to educate herself. Indeed, let her foibles be what they may, she took every opportunity of improving her education, with a view to rising in her profession. She even went over to Paris, to study pathetic parts under the tuition of the famous Made-moiselle Dumensil. She essayed tragedy, which she played in the orthodox stilted style then in vogue; but she excelled in comedy. In the latter, she could give full swing to all the vivacity of her

temperament ; and her extreme unconventionality, and her scorn of stage traditions, seem to have in no small degree contributed to her success.

On Saint Patrick's Day, 1743, the Irish actress took her first benefit at Drury Lane. Upon this occasion she resigned her favourite character of *Sir Harry Wildair* to Garrick, who played it very badly. Mrs. Woffington contented herself with a subordinate part, and during the play was chiefly employed in prompting the hero. Even in the zenith of her professional career Mrs. Woffington never refused to play for a benefit. Hitchcock, the prompter of the Dublin theatre, in his accurate and painstaking "History of the Irish Stage," says of her :—

"To her honour be it ever remembered, that whilst thus in the zenith of her glory, courted and caressed by all ranks and degrees, it made no alteration in her behaviour ; *she remained the same gay, affable, obliging, good-natured Woffington to every one around her.* She had none of those occasional illnesses which I have sometimes seen assumed by capital performers, to the great vexation and loss of the manager and disappointment of the public. She always acted four times each week.

"Not the lowest performer in the theatre did she refuse playing for. Out of twenty-six benefits she acted in twenty-four, and one of the other two

was for Mrs. Lee, who chose to treat the town with an exhibition of her own Juliet. Such traits of character must endear the memory of Mrs. Woffington to every lover of the drama.”*

Mrs. Woffington was living at Teddington at this time—about 1745—and there made the acquaintance of George Anne Bellamy and her mother. The latter she had been acquainted with in Dublin, and with true Irish hospitality at once invited the two ladies to come and stay with her for some time. The invitation was accepted, and in her “Apology” George Anne Bellamy says:—

“The general topic of conversation among my associates was confined to theatrical affairs, with which I was totally unacquainted till I was introduced into this circle. The charms of novelty, however, rendered it agreeable. Whilst we stayed here it was agreed on to perform the tragedy of the ‘Distressed Mother,’ in order to make a trial of Miss Polly Woffington’s abilities, who was intended by her sister for the stage. My mother and Mrs. Woffington played the attendants; Mr. Garrick, *Orestes*; Mr. Sullivan, a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, *Pyrrus*; Miss Woffington, *Her-mione*; and *Andromache* fell to my lot.

“In this performance, though my first, Mr.

* Hitchcock, vol. ii. p. 223.

Garrick observed that I was much more in earnest than the young lady who had been accustomed to theatrical amusements ; and though I was inferior in beauty to my fair rival, and without the advantages of dress which she enjoyed, yet the laurel was bestowed upon me. All the people of fashion in the neighbourhood honoured our barn with their presence. Among these was the late Sir William Young, who gave it as his opinion that I should make a figure in a capital line, if ever I came upon the stage."

George Anne Bellamy did go upon the stage, and was often a sore thorn in the flesh to Mrs. Woffington. Viewed at this distance of time, their little quarrels and petty jealousies seem almost ludicrous and childish. Now and again Bellamy gives her brilliant countrywoman credit for playing "with her usual *éclat*," but they were intensely jealous of each other nevertheless. George Anne delightedly records how she secured the attentions of Sir George Metham, much to the annoyance of Mrs. Woffington, "who seemed to expect to have the tribute of admiration from every one first paid to her."

Upon the revival of Lee's tragedy of "Alexander," Mrs. Bellamy had ordered two new dresses from Paris, in which to appear as "The Persian Princess." Rich, the manager, heard of this, and

as Mrs. Woffington was notorious for the carelessness of her dress, he purchased for her a suit of the Princess Dowager of Wales, to be worn by the actress in the character of *Roxana*. Mrs. Woffington knew nothing of Mrs. Bellamy's new Paris dress, and was secretly delighting in the opportunity of appearing so magnificently attired before her rival. Her rage and disappointment knew no bounds when they met in the green-room, and she beheld Mrs. Bellamy appear in all the grandeur of her new Parisian robes.

"I desire, madam," exclaimed the enraged Roxana, "you will never more, upon any account, wear those clothes in the piece we perform to-night!"

"I know not, madam," replied the Persian Princess, "by what right you take upon you to dictate to me what I shall wear; and I assure you, madam, you must ask it in a very different manner before you obtain my compliance."

A quarrel ensued, in which Mrs. Woffington had the best of it for the time being; but the next night Mrs. Bellamy made her appearance in the other new gown. This so incensed the hot-tempered Peggy that she drove her rival off the stage, and gave her the *coup de grace* almost behind the scenes. The audience—who knew pretty well the terms upon which they were on—were alternately

convulsed with laughter or testified their displeasure by calls for Mrs. Bellamy. "Being now ready to burst with the contending passions which agitated her bosom, she told me it was well for me that I had a *Minister** to supply my extravagance with jewels and such paraphernalia. Struck with so unmerited and cruel a reproach, my asperity became more predominant than my good-nature, and I replied I was sorry that *even half the town* could not furnish a supply equal to the Minister she so illiberally hinted at. Finding I had got myself into a disagreeable predicament," continues Mrs. Bellamy, "and recollecting the well-known distich, that

Ho who fights, and runs away,
May live to fight another day,

I made as quick an exit as possible, notwithstanding I wore the regalia of a queen. But I was obliged in some measure to the Comte for my safety, as his Excellency covered my retreat, and stopped my enraged rival's pursuit. I should otherwise have stood a chance of appearing in the next scene with black eyes, instead of the blue ones which Nature had given me."

The daring and inexhaustible Samuel Foote profited by this behaviour of the two Irish ac-

* Mr. Fox.

tresses, for the next summer he produced a piece called "The Green-room Squabble ; or, a Battle Royal between the Queen of Babylon and the Daughter of Darius." In this inimitable little production, the idiosyncrasies of the belligerents are hit off capitally. Mrs. Bellamy's affectation of calm superiority and injured and libelled innocence are excellent foils to Peggy's recklessness of speech and pungent wit and repartee. After this quarrel they never spoke to each other again, although often acting in the same theatre and in the same piece, until the impulsive Peggy lay upon her deathbed, when she sent for Mrs. Bellamy. She there confessed that she had once done her a secret and intentional injury, by prevailing upon one of her lovers to show Mr. Fox a letter of Mrs. Bellamy's which had fallen into her hands, the contents of which would admit of a different interpretation than that which it was designed to convey.

Mrs. Woffington, who was very sensitive of ridicule, was very angry with Foote, yet the playbills for the same year show her as playing with him at Drury Lane, then under the management of Lacy, who had succeeded Fleetwood. Moreover, the bills surprise us by showing Foote as *Sir Harry Wildair*, and Mrs. Woffington—the only true Sir Harry—as *Lady Lovewell*.

Yet another actor from the Irish stage ! In the

year 1746, Barry made his first appearance in London at Drury Lane. This theatre was, at that time, without a single good actor—save Foote, and he was only good in humorous and semi-grotesque parts. Garrick and Quin were both at Covent Garden, consequently this new tragedian was received with open arms at the rival theatre. The new actor's great character was *Othello*, in which, if he did not absolutely take the town by storm, he at all events pleased his audience, for the play ran for fifteen nights. Then came *Lord Townly*, with Mrs. Woffington as *Lady Townly*. The latter piece was the more successful, owing, no doubt, to Mrs. Woffington's appearing in it.

For some time past there had been a coolness between Garrick and Mrs. Woffington. She had tried to draw him on again, but he had resisted. Such being the state of affairs, it must have been awkward for both when, in 1747, Garrick became part proprietor and stage-manager of Drury Lane. His love fit had very decidedly cooled, and as he brought with him from Covent Garden Mrs. Cibber and Mrs. Pritchard, he foresaw rivalries, jealousies, and clashings, which, though amusing to the partisans of the contending heroines, and redolent of fun to the green-room, are death to the peace of the hapless manager, who must humour them as he may. The season, however, passed off

without any deadly explosion ; but at the close of it, Mrs. Woffington went off again to her old master, Rich, who was only too glad to engage her.

In a pecuniary sense, Mrs. Woffington did not benefit by the change of theatres. She had had no quarrel with her managers, and there is no reason given for her leaving Drury Lane ; none, save caprice. But we must look for a reason ; for Mrs. Woffington, despite the gay life she led, was too good a business woman to throw up an engagement, or to leave a manager in the lurch upon the spur of the moment. Is it not possible that the marriage of Garrick, which took place in 1748, may have been the cause ? There is no doubt but that Mrs. Woffington felt some tenderness for him, and his wife being a woman possessing youth, beauty, wealth, and a good position in society, Peggy may have felt that in some of these matters invidious comparisons might be drawn, and her Irish pride rebelled at it. Garrick married a dancer, a Mademoiselle Violette, who was patronised by the Earl and Countess of Burlington. “The little great man” dearly loved a lord, and was often at the houses of the first nobility. There he saw the fascinating Viennese, who received as her dowry 6000*l.* and a casket of jewels.

Mrs. Woffington remained with Rich at Covent Garden until the beginning of 1751. This engage-

ment was chiefly remarkable for the continual dissensions between the manager and the performers. There was no discipline maintained in the theatre; and the actors despised the lazy and luxurious Rich, who returned the feeling. Moreover, the performers themselves were not on the best of terms with each other. Quin disliked Barry; Barry disliked Quin. Mrs. Woffington and Mrs. Cibber made no secret of their mutual dislike. Garrick tried to get Quin over to Drury Lane, where he would have kept him in order, but Quin did not choose to be subordinate to his former partner. Accordingly, he stayed with Rich, who gave him 1000*l.* a year, the largest salary ever known at that time to have been given to an actor. Mrs. Woffington had only 9*l.* a week, for which she was very thankful; and was ever ready to show her respect for the public, and her willingness to promote the interest of her employers.

The actors had fallen into indifferent and careless habits, and began to send excuses continually. Messages to say they were ill—sent, moreover, late in the day—were the rule, not the exceptions. Mrs. Cibber was suffering from her spasms; Barry was hoarse; Quin had the gout, and so forth. At these times Mrs. Woffington was the prop of the theatre; for the comedies in which she was an attraction were usually substituted, and the invalid

actors announced for another night. But it is not fair to spur a willing horse, and the obliging actress was so overworked that she was at length obliged to complain. She declared that the next time such a thing happened that she would have spasms also ; and she kept her word.

“By this time the public began to murmur at their frequent disappointments, and took it into their heads that they and Rich were victimised by the humours of the company. On the next *indisposition* they determined to resent it. Precisely at this time Mrs. Woffington signified her refusal. On her next appearance, in *Lady Jane Grey*, the whole weight of their displeasure fell upon her. She looked more beautiful than ever that night. Her anger gave a glow to her complexion, and even added lustre to her charming eyes. The audience treated her very severely, bade her ask pardon, and threw orange-peels. She behaved with great resolution, and treated their rudeness with glorious contempt. She left the stage, and was called upon to reappear. With infinite persuasion she was prevailed upon to comply. She walked down to the footlights, and told them she was ready and willing to perform her character if they chose to permit her ; that the decision rested with them. *On or off* just as they pleased ; it was a matter of indifference to her, and that this was the last time

of asking. The *ons* had it, and all went on smoothly afterwards. But she always persisted in attributing this cabal to Rich's particular friends."

Mrs. Woffington would not forgive this insult, and the consequence was, that as soon as ever her engagement at Drury Lane ended, she went off to Dublin, confident of procuring an engagement in her native city.

Mrs. Bland, formerly Miss Romanzini, was then the reigning theatrical queen in the Irish capital, and Sheridan was the proprietor of the Smock Alley Theatre. Victor, his stage-manager and factotum, had had a letter from Colley Cibber, in which the ancient laureate mentioned how very much improved Mrs. Woffington was, and recommended her to the notice of Sheridan. The latter, after demurring for some time, finally consented to engage her for the season of 1751-52 at 400*l.* and a benefit. It turned out a good speculation for Sheridan; and Victor, in a letter to the Countess of Orrery, dated October 21st, 1751, says:—"Mrs. Woffington is the only theme in or out of the theatre. Her performances were in general admirable. She appeared in *Lady Townly*, and since Mrs. Oldfield I have not seen a complete *Lady Townly* till that night. In *Andromache* her grief was dignified, and her deportment elegant. In

Jane Shore nothing appeared remarkable but her superior figure. But in *Hermione* she discovered such talents as have not been displayed since Mrs. Porter. In short, poor Bland is inevitably undone. For those fools, her greatest admirers, who had not sense enough to see her defects before, now see them by the comparison."

The star of Mrs. Bland's popularity had been completely eclipsed, and she accepted an engagement at Covent Garden. Mrs. Woffington now reigned alone. She had set up a grand carriage, with a couple of powdered footmen, and plunged into all kind of gaiety. This was certainly the most brilliant period of her life; and her engagement for the next season was hailed with delight by all classes. Sheridan doubled her salary, and had no reason to think she was overpaid. Lord Dorset was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland at the time, and is referred to in the following verses, which appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for December, 1751. They are addressed to Mrs. Woffington, and recount her success in portraying Shakspearian characters. In conclusion the poet says :

Nor shalt thou want the tributary lay,
O *Sheridan* ! 'Tis what the muse should pay.
Long had the Goths and Vandals of the age,
Oppos'd the reformation of the stage,
Fair Virtue, frighted by the lawless crew,
With her attendant, Decency, withdrew ;

By thee restored, once more the goddess shines,
And forms our morals by her Shakspeare's lines.
For this we owe you much, but more is due,
We owe our darling *Woffington* to you ;
Your mutual talents shall adorn the scene,
And add new lustre to a Dorset's reign.

In unearthing these details respecting Mrs. Woffington, a curious old broadside has turned up. It was printed in Dublin, during this engagement of hers with Sheridan. The type and the paper are equally bad, and the name of the author does not appear. There is reason to believe that this is the only copy of the poem extant, and as it has never been introduced into any previous life of Mrs. Woffington, it is here given in full.

THE CONTEST DECIDED.*

ADDRESSED TO MRS. WOFFINGTON.

The Muses having lately met
To settle their poetic State ;
The Sock and Buskin 'gan to far
(For Females still were fond of War)
And of each other Jealous grown,
Resolved to pull each other down !

Yet all the Motive must commend,
'Twas which was Virtue's better Friend,
Whose scholars too could represent
Best what the Muse and Poet meant.

* The original is preserved amongst the "tracts" in the British Museum Library.

Elate with Hope they take the field,
And armed with Reason scorn to yield ;
As conscious of superior worth,
First stepp'd the Buskin'd Heroin forth ;
Her solemn Air & sable Train
Were Prologue to her Pompous Strain.

'Tis mine, she said, in Courts to shine,
By me the Hero grows divine ;
'Tis mine to crush the haughty Great,
And raise the modest to his Seat ;
To strike the guilty Mind with Fear,
And from the Harden'd force a Tear ;
To raise, depress, or melt the Heart
(My Sheridan's and Garrick's art),
With heroes I adorn the stage,
And into virtue charm the age.

Here interposed the Comic Maid :
But still your subjects are the Dead,
You show what former worlds have been,
In me the present Age is seen ;
Like me, if you would banish Crimes,
Hold forth a Mirror to the Times.
Besides, how little were your Power,
Was Folly left to reign secure ?
For Folks are now not over nice,
But soon from Folly step to Vice :
To mend Mankind you must begin,
And teach them first to fly from Sin.
If Pritchard or if Clive deride,
Pert Dulness drops its saucy Pride ;
And those who laugh at Reason's Rule,
Smart at my strokes of Ridicule,
For Fools ill brook the name of Fool.
Thus quarrel'd they like Man and Wife,
And thus APOLLO ends the Strife.

Rivals no more contend for Fame—
By differ'n't means your End's the same,

And lest these Players should divide You,
Let my Advice and Wisdom guide You ;
You two against them all combine,
And ev'ry Pow'r to one assign,
Blend Spirit, Softness, Taste, and Sense,
And from a finish'd Excellence
Be this the Darling of your Care,
And make your Choice among the Fair.

They strait agreed, but left the Choice
To rest upon his Godship's Voice,
Who, glad to bid the Quarrel cease,
Named *Woffington*, and all was Peace.

Mrs. Woffington remained three years in Dublin upon this occasion. Hers was not alone a social, but a pecuniary success. *Lady Townly*, *Maria*, *Sir Harry Wildair*, and *Hermione*, she performed in, ten times each, and to these was taken the enormous sum of 4000*l*. This was unprecedented upon the Irish stage. Moreover, it should be remembered, they were four old stock plays, and in two of them, Sheridan, whose name was a tower of strength, did not act. This is a strong argument in favour of Mrs. Woffington's popularity.

With the original Beefsteak Club the name of Mrs. Woffington must ever be associated. It was instituted by Sheridan in 1754, and the favourite actress was installed as president. In Geneste's "History of the Stage" he says that there was a club of ancient institution in every theatre, where the performers dined one day in the week together

(generally Saturday), and authors and other literary people were admitted members. But in this club instituted by Sheridan he was at the sole expense, and the persons invited were chiefly Members of Parliament. No female was admitted but Mrs. Woffington, who, as president, sat in a great chair at the head of the table. It will easily be imagined that a club where there were good accommodation, such a lovely president, and nothing to pay, must soon become remarkably fashionable. It did so. Mrs. Woffington was delighted with the novelty of her situation, and had wit and spirit to support it. The table was constantly filled with her friends, who happened all to be courtiers; and as not a glass of wine was drunk at that time in Ireland without first naming the toast, it is easy to guess at the sort of toasts constantly given at that club. At this juncture politics ran very high, and as persons from the opposite party were often introduced by their friends as occasional visitors, the conversation and toasts of this weekly assembly became the common talk of the town. Sheridan was severely censured for being the supporter of it, as he undoubtedly was, and, as manager of the theatre and principal actor, was always in the immediate power of the provoked party. The real truth seems to have been, that Sheridan did not actually realise the importance which was attached

to the opinions discussed at these gatherings. But at length the storm burst, and that with a fury for which none were prepared.

On February 2nd, 1754, the play of "Mahomet" was announced, the cast being as follows :—

Alcanor	...	...	...	DIGGES.
Zaphna	...	...	...	SHERIDAN.
Mahomet	...	...	...	SOWDON.
Palmira	...	...	...	MRS. WOFFINGTON.

Whilst the play was in rehearsal many passages were talked of by the anti-courtiers as pleasing them, and which they would not fail to distinguish. On the night of representation the pit was filled very soon with the leaders of the Country Party, and when Digges spoke the following speech—

If, ye powers divine !
 Ye mark the movements of this nether world,
 And bring them to account, crush, crush those vipers
 Who singled out by the community
 To guard their rights, shall for a grasp of ore,
 Or *pultry office*, sell them to the foe—

no sooner were the words delivered than the pit party roared *encore*, which was continued with such violence that the actor, after having been for a short time astonished, very readily spoke the whole speech again, which was again enthusiastically applauded. The scenes between the two favourites, Sheridan and Mrs. Woffington, passed

unnoticed ; all the approbation fell to the character of Alcanor.

As this was made a party business, Sheridan laid the play aside for one month ; but on March 2nd it was again announced for representation. The day before it was acted Sheridan called the company into the green-room, and commented at great length upon the party spirit which, unfortunately, had marred the previous performance. He concluded by saying that in all new cases he rather wished to persuade than to command. Digges asked to know what were the manager's wishes with reference to his conduct on the ensuing evening. Sheridan answered that he gave no directions, but left him free to act as he thought proper. Digges then said : " Sir, if I should comply with the demands of the audience, and repeat the speech, as I did before, am I to incur your censure for doing it ? " "*Not at all,*" replied the manager, "*I leave you to act in that matter as you think proper.*"

On the night of the performance the pit was full as soon as the doors were open, the house was crowded, and actors and audience waited for the fatal speech in the first scene. The moment Digges had spoken it, he was called on to repeat it with the same vehemence as on the former night. At first he was startled, and stood

for some time motionless; at last, on the continued fierceness of the encores, he made a gesture to be heard. And when silence was obtained, he said : “It would give him the greatest pleasure imaginable to comply with the request of the audience, but he had his *private reasons* for begging they would be so good as to excuse him, as *his compliance would be greatly injurious to him.*” Instead of granting his request, they called out, “Sheridan ! Sheridan !” “The Manager ! the Manager !” Digges left the stage. Sheridan ordered the curtain down, and sent on the prompter to acquaint the audience that they were ready to perform the play, if they were suffered to do so without interruption ; if not, all persons were at liberty to take their money back again. The prompter could scarcely be heard, and the uproar and calls for the manager became more violent and more frequent. “They have no right to call upon me !” exclaimed Sheridan, in agitation and alarm. “I will not obey their call. I will go up to my room and undress myself.” He carried his threat into execution, although his friends left the pit and boxes, and entreated him to appear and satisfy the audience. Sheridan’s conduct in this matter was not very heroic,—the truth was, he was afraid of personal violence, so he sneaked out, got into a chair, and went home, leaving the house in a state of uproar and confusion.

Thus left to themselves, the performers were uncertain what to do. Sheridan had deserted them, and Digges was afraid to appear. At this juncture Mrs. Woffington went before the curtain, to try what influence a beautiful woman, and a reigning favourite, could have upon the infuriated multitude. But this was only adding fuel to the flame, as her political connexions were well known. She was obliged to retire without being granted a hearing, and Digges, the seeming favourite, was induced to try and address the mob. He assured them that Sheridan had laid him under no injunction not to repeat the speech, and therefore on that account could not have incurred their displeasure. Digges was listened to in profound silence, and when he had concluded, the audience informed him that they must see Sheridan. On being told that the manager had left the house, they said they would wait for him for an hour. Messengers were sent, but no entreaties could prevail upon Sheridan to come back to the theatre. When the hour was expired, the rioters renewed their call, and after continuing it for some time unsuccessfully, determined to demolish the house. In a few minutes the benches, boxes, &c., were in pieces, and they were proceeding to fire the house, when they were stopped just in time.

They attacked the stage, and made a raid upon

the wardrobe, and Victor, the stage-manager, not knowing where they would stop, hastened directly to the Castle to inform the Lord Lieutenant of the danger they were in. The Duke of Dorset said the Lord Mayor was the proper person to interfere, but he excused himself as being ill with the gout. Victor then went in search of the High Sheriffs of both Houses, but could not find them. The Captain of the Guard would not march without orders, and as the riot at the theatre had been expected, and it was known to be a party occasion, the magistrates are supposed to have concealed themselves designedly.

The theatre was demolished as far as its interior arrangements were concerned. Sheridan quite lost the favour of the public. The best course he could have adopted would have been to have laid the play aside when he knew that its production was likely to lead to a riot. The next best thing would have been to battle out the danger he had braved, and the worst thing of all was to fly and leave his performers in the lurch. However, he repented of this cowardly conduct, and did his best to make reparation to the company. "Though used with unparalleled cruelty," says Hitchcock, "and ruined in his fortune past all hopes of retrieving, yet, feeling for the performers who were innocently involved in his distresses, he resolved

they should not partake of them; and, with a disinterestedness which will ever do honour to his character, generously gave up to them the use of the theatre, or what remained of it, with the wardrobe and scenery, with the benefits during the rest of the season, not only without any emolument, but with a certain loss to himself."

After some temporary repairs, the theatre reopened on March 18th, sixteen days after the riot, by command of the Duke and Duchess of Dorset, for Mrs. Woffington's benefit, when "All for Love" was acted to a crowded house. The rest of the benefits continued until the middle of May, when Mrs. Woffington returned to London.

In the autumn of 1754, Victor, in a letter to the Duke of Dorset, says :—"When I waited on Mrs. Woffington to take my leave at her setting out for London, I told her I thought it for her interest as well as ours that she should be engaged the next winter there. She was greatly disappointed at not receiving proposals from me, upon which I told her she would find Sowdon* in London,

* Sowdon had entered into partnership with Victor. They took Smock Alley Theatre for two years from Sheridan, and advanced him 2000*l.* for the use of the wardrobe.—*Geneste*, vol. x. p. 392.

and if it was her desire to return, whatever terms they agreed on should have my hearty concurrence. They met in consequence; but as she expected her former salary of 800*l.*, he very wisely got rid of the subject as fast as he could. No man has a higher sense of her merit than I have; yet that great salary cannot be given, even to her, the fourth season, because novelty is the very spirit and life of all public entertainments." There are sound managerial reasons in this letter, as applicable now as when they were penned, close on a century and a quarter ago.

Mrs. Woffington went back to her old master, Rich, of Covent Garden, who was only too glad to receive her. On October 22nd she made her reappearance upon the London stage in the character of *Maria*, in the "Nonjuror." The return of such a favourite actress, and one so well acquainted with persons in high life, drew a crowded house. In consequence of the "Mahomet Riot," Sheridan had been obliged to leave Ireland, and was engaged by Rich in place of Barry, who had gone over to Dublin. Throughout the season Sheridan played many leading Shakspearian characters, with Mrs. Woffington as the heroine. "Sheridan, under the disadvantages of a moderate person, and still more moderate voice, by the effect of sound judgment, undoubtedly stands next to Garrick in this cha-

racter ;”* and, notwithstanding her “deplorable tragedy voice,” Mrs. Woffington seems to have pleased both the performers and the public.

The season of 1756 is chiefly remarkable for our heroine’s quarrel with Tate Wilkinson. He was a poor gentleman, anxious to go on the stage, which he eventually did. Mrs. Woffington was very sensitive to ridicule, and having been told that Tate Wilkinson had given some burlesque imitations of her manner of acting, which enraged her, one night he was in a stage-box when she was acting *Clarissa*, and was unfortunate enough to attract her attention. Some one in a box above gave a shrill laugh, something like Mrs. Woffington’s, and she, believing Wilkinson to be the culprit, advanced to the stage-box and sneered at him. The next day, when he was waiting for an audience with Rich, he says : “Mrs. Woffington passed through the room ; and without a word, curtesy, or bow of her head, proceeded on to her sedan, from which she as haughtily returned, and advancing towards me with queen-like steps, and viewing me most contemptuously, said : ‘Mr. Wilkinson, I have made a visit this morning to Mr. Rich to command and to insist on his not giving you any engagement whatever ; no, not of the most menial

* *Vide* criticism on Sheridan’s “Hamlet,” *Dramatic Censor*, vol. ii. p. 372.

kind in the theatre. Merit you have none; charity you deserve not,—for if you did my purse should give you a dinner; your impudence to me last night, where you had with such assurance placed yourself, is one proof of your ignorance; added to that, I heard you echo my voice when I was acting, and I sincerely hope that in whatever barn you act as an unworthy stroller, that you will fully experience the same contempt you dared last night to offer me.’”

Could anything be more characteristic of Peg Woffington’s fiery Irish temperament than this episode, so quaintly and so ingenuously recorded by Tate Wilkinson in his voluminous “Memoirs!”

About this period her friends began to observe a change in the demeanour of the lively and fascinating actress. She was in her thirty-seventh year only, yet it was apparent that her health, spirits, and beauty were on the decline. The seeds of an internal complaint had already been sown, but, with her customary recklessness, she disregarded all warnings. The famous John Wesley was at that time preaching in London, and the fame of his sermons reached the actress. She attended his chapel, at first from curiosity, then from conviction. She was too clear-headed, and of too quick and sensitive a nature, not to have been impressed by the truth and earnestness of

the great preacher. Stung with remorse, she realised the errors which she had committed, the temptations to which she had given way, and the emptiness of worldly vanity and ambition as compared to the great question of eternity. Nevertheless, although she determined upon reforming her private life, it does not appear that she had any intention of quitting her profession. As far as years went she was in the prime of womanhood ; " but," said she, " I will never destroy my own reputation by clinging to the shadow after the substance is gone. When I can no longer bound on the boards with elastic step, and when the enthusiasm of the public begins to show symptoms of decay, that night will be the last appearance of Margaret Woffington."

She did not remain before the public long enough for them to become tired of her. " That night" came, but not under the circumstances she had named. On the 3rd of May, 1757, she appeared as *Rosalind* in " As You Like It," and her name is announced in the same playbill for several benefits to follow. Tate Wilkinson—whom she had never forgiven for having mimicked her in Dublin—was standing at the wing as she went on with Mrs. Pritchard, who was acting *Celia*. She looked at him scornfully, and said ironically that she was glad to have an opportunity of congratu-

lating him on his success as an actor, knowing he had recently met with a mortifying failure, and expressed her conviction that such merit as his could not fail to procure him an engagement the following winter.

“She went through *Rosalind* for four acts without my perceiving she was in the least disordered; but in the fifth she complained of great indisposition. I offered her my arm, the which she graciously accepted; I thought she looked softened in her behaviour, and had less of the *hauteur*. When she came off at the quick change of dress, she again complained of being ill, but got accoutred, and returned to finish the part, and pronounced in the epilogue speech,—‘If it be true that good wine needs no bush, it is as true that a good play needs no epilogue,’ &c. &c. But when arrived at ‘If I were among you I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me,’ her voice broke, she faltered, endeavoured to go on, but could not proceed; then, in a voice of tremor, screamed, ‘O God! O God!’ tottered to the stage door speechless, where she was caught. The audience, of course, applauded until she was out of sight, and then sunk into awful looks of astonishment—both young and old, before and behind the curtain—to see one of the most handsome women of the age, a favourite principal actress, and who

had for several seasons given high entertainment, struck so suddenly by the hand of death in such a situation of time and place, and in her prime of life, being then about forty-four.”* She was given over that night and for several days ; but so far recovered as to linger till near the year 1760, but existed as a mere skeleton.†

Such were the circumstances attending the last appearance of Margaret Woffington, who for upwards of twenty-seven years had been the delight of the theatre-going public. It was a fitting termination for her brilliant and romantic public career. But if the skeleton was all that remained of the beautiful and fascinating actress, it was fully replaced by the newly-awakened soul of the woman desirous of proving her penitence by an amended life. She did her best to try and awaken the consciences of her former theatrical associates, but her earnestness was scouted at as hypocrisy, and it was insinuated that now that her beauty and spirits were gone that she took up religion as a new means of excitement. From that time forward she never associated with any of her late companions. How fortunate it is for frail humanity that God and not man is the judge of its motives !

* A mistake. She was just thirty-seven.

† *Vide* “Tate Wilkinson’s Memoirs,” vol. i. pp. 103, 104.

She retired to Teddington, and for nearly three years lived there, zealous in the performance of deeds of kindness and charity towards her poorer neighbours. "There is no position," she used to say during these latter days, when speaking of the stage, "so full of temptation. At the bottom of my heart I always loved and honoured virtue, but the stage made me for years a worthless woman." In her reformed and retired life there was no outward show of puritanic austerity. She was grave, yet cheerful, and tradition yet tells how she might have been constantly seen trudging along the roads and lanes at Teddington with a basket on her arm, bent upon some errand of mercy. Her annuity, left to her by her old friend Owen McSwiney, died with her; but she had saved five thousand pounds, which she left to her sister, together with her stage jewels. The latter, her friend Mrs. Barrington (an actress) had expected to become possessed of, but as there was no clause to that effect in the will, Mrs. Cholmondely insisted upon having them. The actress, in order to get them, insinuated they were worthless, and only fit for stage effects. But her opponent knew better, for it was the custom of Mrs. Woffington's aristocratic and wealthy worshippers to tender their homage in the very substantial form of diamonds. The

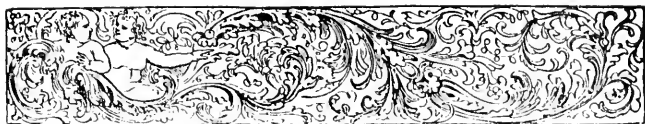
story that she erected the almshouses at Teddington is quite without foundation. They were built a hundred years previously, and the one added during her lifetime was built by subscription. She may possibly have been one of the subscribers.

Margaret Woffington died at Teddington, and was buried in a vault beneath the parish church. A tablet on a neighbouring wall bears the following inscription :—

“Near this monument lies the body of Margaret Woffington, spinster, born October the 18th, 1720, who departed this life March the 28th, 1760, aged 39 years.”

Alike blameworthy and praiseworthy, think of the circumstances of her strange and chequered career, and, in estimating her character, let a leaven of the greatest of the Christian virtues influence your conclusions.

Gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler, sister woman;
Though they may gang a kennin wrang,
To step aside is human.



GEORGE ANNE BELLAMY.

BORN 1731. DIED 1788.

BLUE-EYED Bellamy" plays no unimportant part in the stage-history of the last century. No great actress, in the strict sense of the word, she is chiefly remembered for the romantic circumstances of her birth, and because of the illustrious names which were associated with hers. She is a true type of the gay and frivolous stage beauty—egotistical, heartless, selfish, and intensely vain, in the widest and worst sense of that latter term.

Towards the close of 1784 appeared a work, in five small volumes, entitled "An Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy, written by herself." The style adopted was that of a series of letters to a female friend. It was actually written by Alexander Bicknell, from materials supplied by Mrs. Bellamy; and as she had kept neither notes nor diary, and was obliged to trust entirely to her memory,

this accounts for many errors in dates and other details. There is an apparent candour in this "Apology," and a spurious ingenuousness which at first attracts, but which soon wears off when the *motives* of the apologist are tested. At the same time, her garrulousness is so amusing, and occasionally so graphic, that it will be best to let her tell the chief events of her history in her own words.

Genius creates, talent polishes and makes use of these creations ; and in the days when George Anne Bellamy—a bright though a baleful star—appeared before the footlights, it was indispensable for an actress to possess either or both these qualifications. In this age it is merely necessary for a wealthy patron to take a theatre for a beautiful *protégée*, who can there pose her lovely person to the best advantage. Society makes such an exhibition the fashion, and the world and his wife blindly follow suit. But when Garrick, Rich, and Sheridan were managers—two of them actors—the case was somewhat different. The spurs had to be won before they could be worn, so that the sudden popularity of George Anne Bellamy must be looked upon as exceptional.

Our heroine was the natural daughter of an Irish nobleman, James O'Hara, Lord Tyrawley, mentioned in no very complimentary terms by

Pope.* He fought in Flanders under the great Duke of Marlborough, rose to be a general officer, and colonel of the Coldstream Guards, and was more than once employed on important missions as a foreign ambassador. He was a man of no mean wit and ability, but of most immoral character. A spendthrift and a gambler, Lord Tyrawley soon ran through his estate, and, having no legitimate heir male, the title expired with him. He died at the age of eighty-three.† Lord Chesterfield said of himself and of this ancient *roué*, when both had become very old and infirm: "Tyrawley and I have been dead these two years, but we don't choose to have it known." Boswell retails that Dr. Johnson—who greatly disliked Lord Chesterfield, and justly—allows the merit of "good wit" to this saying. Notwithstanding the high authority by which it is endorsed, we are dull enough not to be able to see the imputed brilliancy of this remark.

When Miss Seal—the mother of George Anne Bellamy—was yet but a schoolgirl, Lord Tyrawley persuaded her to elope with him under promise of marriage—a promise which he never kept. For some months she lived with him in his apartments

* "Go dine with Chartres, in each vice outdo,
K—I's lewd cargo, or Ty—y's crew."

† A.D. 1773.

at Somerset House, where she was treated with the same respect as if she had been really Lady Tyrawley. At the end of this time his lordship was ordered to join his regiment in Ireland, where, upon his arrival, he found his estates so involved by the bad management of his steward that nothing could retrieve his affairs but an advantageous marriage. With this object in view he paid his addresses to Lady Mary Stewart, daughter of the Earl of Blessington, whose fortune was reputed to be 30,000*l*. During the courtship, the Earl of Blessington, having heard a rumour of the connexion between his intended son-in-law and Miss Seal, wrote to the latter to desire information concerning the nature of their intimacy, at the same time explaining the motives for his request. In the violence of her resentment, Miss Seal inclosed to Lord Blessington every letter she had ever had from her faithless lover. Amongst them was one she had just received, and which she sent unopened. In this last epistle Lord Tyrawley, after explaining the necessity for his marriage, added that "he should stay no longer with his intended wife than was necessary to receive her fortune, when he would immediately fly on the wings of love to share it with her; that he had made choice of Lady Mary Stewart, who was both ugly and foolish, in preference to one with an equal

fortune who was beautiful and sensible, lest an union with a more agreeable person might be the means of decreasing his affection for her ;” and much more to the same effect. Lord Blessington, highly irritated on the perusal of this letter, instantly forbade his daughter ever to see or to write again to her perfidious lover. But his injunction came too late : they had been already privately married. Lord Tyrawley, however, was disappointed of his expected fortune ; his mistress renounced her connexion with him ; a separation from his wife ensued ; and his lordship, the disappointed victim of his own duplicity, was sent, on his own solicitation, in a public character to Lisbon.

Cast off by her lover and by her family, without money and without friends, Miss Seal now embraced the theatrical profession, and for several years performed with much success in Dublin. A dispute arising between her and the proprietor of the theatre, she formed the resolution of going to Portugal in search of Lord Tyrawley. He received her with open arms, and they lived together for some months ; when, hearing of his attachment to a Spanish beauty, Miss Seal abruptly left Lord Tyrawley, and married Captain Bellamy. They immediately set sail for Ireland, where, soon after their arrival, George Anne was born, at Fingal, on

the 23rd of April, 1731. It was intended that she should have been christened Georgiana, but by some mistake she appears in the baptismal registry as George Anne.

Captain Bellamy must have felt no small amount of astonishment at having paternal honours thrust upon him much too soon for him to lay any claim to them. He immediately quitted his faithless wife, and never returned to her. Again she betook herself to the stage for a livelihood, and some years later went through a form of marriage with a younger son of Sir George Walter, a dissipated young officer, juvenile enough to be her own child. However, she paid the penalty for her foolishness, for he deserted her, taking with him every article of value she possessed, even to her dresses.

At the time of the birth of our heroine, Lord Tyrawley—who felt satisfied that she was his daughter—was absent on diplomatic service in Lisbon. A friend of his—a Captain Pye—was stationed at Fingal at the time of her birth, and to him Lord Tyrawley wrote, requesting that Mrs. Pye, who had no children of her own, would take the infant under her care, and prevent the mother from holding any intercourse with her. With Mrs. Pye she lived until she was about five years of age, when her father directed she should be sent to a French convent, and brought up in the Roman

Catholic faith. When George Anne was about eleven years old, her father returned home, bringing with him a Portuguese dulcinea and a large family by different mothers. He took a country house for them at Bushey, and George Anne was added to the establishment.

She soon became a great favourite with her father and his companions, who were in general more witty and gay than conscientious, and overwhelmed her with flattery with the view of paying court to her sire. Thus, she says, she was soon made to believe she was a phenomenon, blessed with talents and attractions which Nature seldom or never combines.

“Lord Tyrawley having prohibited my reading ‘Cassandra,’ the only romance in his library, and one which a girl of my age and lively disposition would naturally have first laid her hands upon, preferring poetry to history, I endeavoured to learn Pope’s ‘Homer’ by rote. In this I made such proficiency, that in a short time I could repeat the first three books. When I thought myself sufficiently perfect, I languished to be introduced to the incomparable author of them, not doubting but he would be as much charmed with my manner of repeating ‘The wrath of Peleus’ son’ as I myself was.

“It was not till after I had frequently solicited

Lord Tyrawley upon this head that he would listen to my request. At length, however, he consented, and we set off together for Twickenham. As I rode along, the suggestions of vanity overpowered every apprehension, and I was not a little elated when I reflected on the conspicuous figure I was about to make. The carriage stopped at the door; we were introduced to this little *great man*. But before I had time to collect *myself*, or to examine *him*, Mr. Pope rang the bell for his housekeeper, and directed her to take *Miss* and show her the garden, and give her as much fruit as she chose to eat.

“How shall I find words to express the mortification I felt upon this occasion! It is not in the power of language to describe the true situation of my mind, on finding my vanity thus humbled. It is to be supposed I was not very complaisant to the old lady. But she did not long attend me; for we had scarcely got into the gardens before she pretended business, and left me to admire them, and eat fruit by myself.

“I was not in the least displeased at the housekeeper’s abrupt departure, as it gave me leisure to meditate, and contrive some method of resenting so gross an affront offered to the *infant Dacier*. For no less a personage in the world of literature did I fancy that I should be when my amazing

powers had acquired perfection. At last I concluded to carry into execution my plan of revenge. I determined never to read the cynic's translation of the 'Iliad' again, but wholly to attach myself to Dryden's 'Virgil.' My heart exulted in the thought, and I experienced those sweet sensations which arise from the hopes of being amply revenged for insult. But whilst I was indulging myself in this pleasant reverie, I was informed that the carriage waited.

"I hastened to it ; and when I joined Lord Tyrawley, found that he had prevailed upon the Earl of Chesterfield, who had happened to come in just after my supposed disgrace, to accompany us to Bushey. That nobleman soon made me amends for the treatment I had just received, and removed the chagrin it had occasioned. The elegant praises of a Chesterfield transported my little heart, and atoned for the casual contempt of a Pope. They filled my bosom with inconceivable pleasure, and impressed upon my memory such a partiality for the bestower of them as was never after eradicated. Indeed, the favourable opinion he honoured me with in my profession was not a little flattering, and claimed my warmest gratitude."

Not long afterwards Lord Tyrawley went on a diplomatic mission to Russia ; and as George Anne and Donna Anna, the Portuguese dulcinea,

did not agree, he thought it best to separate them before leaving England. Accordingly, he placed his daughter under the care of a lady of quality, allowing 100*l.* a year for her maintenance. He also left strict orders that upon any account whatever she was not to be allowed to hold any intercourse with her mother. It was just about this time that the unfortunate woman had contracted her ill-assorted union with young Walter. When he left her penniless, she, not knowing the conditions enforced by Lord Tyrawley, succeeded in having an interview with her daughter. Here she descanted upon her penury, and represented to George Anne what an advantage the 100*l.* a year would be to her. The result was that George Anne ran away from her kind protectress, and took up her abode with her mother, who promised her such liberty of action as she had never yet enjoyed. She took with her her watch and other trinkets, upon which her mother borrowed some money to enable them to live until the next quarterly payment became due. But when the wished-for hour arrived, what was their mortification to find the money would be no longer paid ! George Anne Bellamy had gone off with her mother solely to gratify her own self-will, and that desire for notoriety at any price which was ever her besetting sin. Yet, at this juncture, it is

amusing to find how she makes this false step an excuse for the indiscretions of her after life. "My imprudent removal," she says, speaking as though she had not acted of her own free-will, "from the protection of the noble patroness to whose care I had been committed by Lord Tyrawley, though the motive was in some measure allowable, as it proceeded from filial affection" (?) "laid the foundation of all those errors and subsequent misfortunes which have been my lot." She wrote to Lord Tyrawley, and received a reply in which he said he would allow her no future support, and renounced her for ever. The mother and daughter were now literally without the means of living, and gladly accepted an invitation from a Mrs. Jackson to pass some time with her at Twickenham. In this neighbourhood also resided Mrs. Woffington; and Mrs. Bellamy, who had known the famous actress in Dublin, again made her acquaintance, and introduced her daughter to her. The kind-hearted Peg Woffington listened to their tale of distress, and invited them to come and stay with her at Teddington as soon as their visit to Mrs. Jackson was ended.

At Mrs. Woffington's, George Anne Bellamy made the acquaintance of Garrick, Sheridan, Rich—the manager of Covent Garden—and other dramatic celebrities. Miss Polly Woffington,

who afterwards married the Hon. Mr. Cholmondeley, was at this time in training for the stage under her sister's auspices; and, in order to make a trial of her abilities, a private performance was decided upon. The tragedy of the "Distressed Mother" was the piece selected for the essay. Mrs. Bellamy and Mrs. Woffington played the attendants; Garrick, *Orestes*; Mr. Sullivan, a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, *Pyrrhus*; Miss Polly Woffington, *Hermione*; whilst *Andromache* fell to the lot of the afterwards famous George Anne.

She was not quite fourteen at the time, and had no advantages of dress or personal adornment of any kind. The piece was acted in a barn, to which came all the rank and fashion of the neighbourhood. Garrick complimented her upon her rendering of the part, commenting especially upon her earnestness.

At that time the salaries of the subordinate players were never regularly paid. The consequence of this was that Mrs. Bellamy had a standing account with Rich, of Covent Garden, who was somewhat in arrears to her. She constantly went to his house to endeavour to procure payment; and during these visits was usually accompanied by her daughter. An intimacy sprang up between George Anne and the daughters of Rich; and the young people, hearing theatrical mat-

ters so much talked about, conceived the idea of having a performance of "Othello" amongst themselves. "When we were perfect in the words, we began to rehearse. During the rehearsal, as we were only playing for our own amusement, and I concluded we were not overheard, I gave free scope to my fancy and to my voice ; and I really believe our performance was more perfect, as it was truly natural, than if it had been aided by the studied graces of professors. As I was raving in all the extremity of jealous madness, Mr. Rich accidentally passed by the room in which we were rehearsing. Attracted, as he afterwards said, by the powerful sweetness of the Moor's voice, which he declared to be superior to any one he had ever heard, he listened without interrupting our performance ; but as soon as it was concluded, he entered the room, and paid me a thousand compliments on my theatrical abilities. Among other things, he said, that in his opinion I should make one of the first actresses in the world ; adding, that if I could turn my thoughts to the stage, he should be happy to engage me.

"Not a little vain of receiving these encomiums from a person who from his situation must be a competent judge, I went home and informed my mother of what had happened.

"At first she was averse to my accepting the

proposal, having experienced herself all the disadvantages attendant on a theatrical life ; but Mrs. Jackson uniting her persuasions to those of Mr. Rich, she at length consented. She, however, complied only on condition that the manager would assure her of his supporting me in a capital line. This Mr. Rich agreed to do.

“ At the time I entered into an engagement with Mr. Rich I was just fourteen,* of a figure not inelegant, a powerful voice, light as the gossamer, of inexhaustible spirits, and possessed of some humour. From these qualifications he formed the most sanguine hopes of my success, and determined that I should immediately make trial of them. I had perfected myself in the two characters of *Monimia* and *Athenais*, and, according to my own judgment, had made no inconsiderable proficiency in them. The former was fixed on for my first appearance.

“ Mr. Rich now thought it time to introduce me to Mr. Quin, then the most capital performer at Covent Garden ; and capital he was, indeed, in those characters which his figure suited. This gentleman, at that period, governed the theatre

* A mistake. G. A. Bellamy was born in 1731, and in 1745 she acted in the barn at Teddington with Woffington and Garrick. She had not then thought of adopting the stage as a profession ; and it was in the year after, 1746, that she became acquainted with Rich.

with a rod of iron. Mr. Rich, though the proprietor, was, through his indolence, a mere cipher. He was, however, when he had resolved on anything, the most determined of men. After waiting some time at the door of the lion's den, as the people of the theatre had denominated Mr. Quin's dressing-room, we were at length admitted. It is necessary here to observe that this gentleman never condescended to enter the green-room, or to mix with the other performers, all of whom he was unacquainted with, except Mr. Ryan, for whom he entertained a particular friendship, which lasted till Mr. Ryan's death.

"He no sooner heard Mr. Rich propose my appearing in the character of *Monimia*, than with the most sovereign contempt he cried out, 'It will not do, sir.' Upon which the manager, to his infinite surprise, replied, 'It shall do, sir.' I was so frightened at Mr. Quin's austere deportment, that had he requested me to give him a specimen of my abilities, it would not have been in my power. But he held me too cheap to put me to the trial. After some further altercation had passed, which was not much in my favour, Mr. Quin at last deigned to look at me, saying at the same time, '*Child*, I would advise you to play *Serina*, before you think of *Monimia*.' This sarcasm roused my spirits, which before were much sunk, and I pertly

replied, 'If I did, sir, I should never live to play the *Orphan*.'

Quin remonstrated: the manager was inexorable: the result being that a rehearsal was called for the next day. Quin vowed that he would publicly declare his sentiments upon the absurdity and impropriety of allowing a child to appear in so important a part. Furthermore, he refused to attend rehearsals; he kept his word, too, but Rich fined him heavily, which soon brought him to his allegiance. Hale and Ryan followed the example of Quin, and met with the same summary treatment from the determined manager. They put in an appearance at the third rehearsal, when Hale mumbled over the part of *Castalio*, and Ryan whistled *Polydore*; and even *Serina*, who was only an attendant upon tragedy queens, smiled contemptuously upon the aspiring novice. The real state of the case was, that Rich looked upon George Anne as a means of indulging his pet foible of "larning novices to act." He was a perfectly uneducated man, but was possessed with the firm conviction that he was admirably suited to be a theatrical instructor. "Lay your *impharsis* on the *adjutant*!" he once said, with managerial importance, to a trembling neophyte. A *parenthesis* he pronounced a *prentice*, and the words

turbot and *turban* he invariably confounded.* Certainly, all through this mortifying opposition, Rich supported his *protégée* by every means in his power. Concluding that, as a true daughter of Eve, she was not exempt from love of dress, he allowed her to choose her costume for the occasion.

The contention in the theatre waged so fiercely, that even the public got wind of the matter. The dreaded evening at length arrived. Previous to it, Mr. Quin had declared his opinion that the piece would be a failure; Rich, on the contrary, was equally confident of success. The public curiosity had been so much excited from the reports of the quarrels, that on this eventful night the theatre was crowded in every part. The curtain drew up to one of the most brilliant audiences that had ever graced Covent Garden—an audience too with the remembrance fresh in their minds of having seen *Monimia* played to perfection by the lovely and languishing Susanna Cibber.

The manager having pledged himself for the success of George Anne, had planted numbers of

* There was a stage-manager at Covent Garden, rather less than a century ago, who reproved a well-educated actor for saying *imminent* danger, and ordered him to change the adjective to *eminent*.

his friends around the house in order to insure it. His consternation and dismay may well be imagined when he saw the neophyte advance to the footlights, and there stand like a statue. The friends of Rich loudly applauded, but their plaudits seemed only to frighten her all the more. She was struck with unmistakable stage-fright, and the pit, compassionating her youth and nervousness, ordered down the curtain again to give her time to recover herself. Rich was in an agony; the malicious actors smiled in exultation; the curtain was drawn up, but even then her terror so overcame her that she could scarcely be heard in the side-boxes. During the first three acts she seemed every minute upon the point of breaking down. The manager was in an agony, and did all in his power to encourage her. Her fate as an actress hung upon the fourth act; by that criterion she was to be judged, and by the judgment passed she would rise or fall. Suddenly, to the astonishment of the audience, the surprise of the performers, and the exultation of the manager, she felt herself inspired. Her own personality was forgotten, her whole soul was in the piece, and she acquitted herself throughout the whole of this most arduous part of the character, in which even veterans have failed, with the greatest *éclat*. The house was carried by

storm, and the curtain fell amidst enthusiastic shouts of applause.

Quin, utterly amazed at the turn affairs had taken, waited behind the scenes until the conclusion of the act. He was too generous-minded not to give praise where praise was due; and lifting the young actress off the ground, in a transport of delight, he exclaimed before the assembled company, "Thou art a divine creature, and the true spirit is in thee." The performers who, half an hour before, had looked upon her with pity, now crowded around to load her with congratulations; and as for Rich, he expressed as much triumph upon this occasion as ever he did upon the success of one of his own darling pantomimes.

From this moment Quin honoured her with a steady friendship, which never once wavered as long as he lived. Lord Tyrawley had been an old friend of his; and finding that George Anne was that nobleman's daughter, and that her mother was in distress, he inclosed a bank-note in a blank cover, and sent it by the penny post. He also gave the young lady a general invitation to his suppers, which were held four times a week. All the literati of the age frequented these parties, where wit, repartee, bon-mots, conviviality, and good cheer went hand in hand.

Mrs. Jackson always accompanied her to these suppers, for Quin particularly enjoined her never to come alone, because, as he jocosely said, he was not yet old enough to secure her from scandal. It would have been well for George Anne Bellamy if she had always followed the advice of this rough but honest monitor. Quin had the manners of a bear, with the heart of a lamb.

Miss Bellamy was now regularly installed as a member of the Covent Garden Theatre company. Quin was stage-manager, and had it in his power to show her many kindnesses. She next appeared in the character of *Aspasia*, in Beaumont and Fletcher's play of "The Maid's Tragedy," a piece revived by Quin. The latter took a benefit early in 1745, in which Miss Bellamy acted *Arsinoë* in Fenton's "Mariamne." After the rehearsal of the latter play, Quin one day requested to speak with the young actress in his dressing-room. As he had always studiously avoided seeing her alone, she was not a little surprised at so unexpected an invitation. She even feared that she had in some way offended him. However, her fears were of short duration, for as soon as she entered the room he took her affectionately by the hand, and said, "My dear girl, you are vastly followed, I hear. Do not let the love of finery, or any other inducement, prevail upon you to commit an indis-

cretion. Men in general are rascals ; you are young and engaging, and therefore ought to be doubly cautious. If you want anything in my power which money can purchase, come to me, and say, ‘James Quin, give me such a thing,’ and my purse shall be always at your service.”

George Anne acted *Aspasia* for five successive nights. This was followed by *Lucia*, in “Cato ;” *Celia*, in “Volpone ;” and *Blanche*, in Colley Cibber’s alteration (or rather *mutilation*) of Shakspeare’s “King John,” which the poet-laureate had re-christened “Papal Tyranny.” On this occasion Cibber, who had retired for more than ten years, came out again at drivelling seventy-five to exhibit his dotage as *Cardinal Pandulph*. He had lost all his teeth, and was quite inarticulate. The audience extended full indulgence to his age and former reputation, but visited his son, Theophilus, with marked tokens of their displeasure. The father had taught him—and as many more of the actors as submitted to be schooled, Miss Bellamy amongst the rest—the traditional mode of chanting and quavering out their tragic notes. The public spared the old man, but signified no tolerance for his younger disciples. Nevertheless, this disgraceful hodge-podge ran for ten nights ; and so great were the attractions of the young actress that it realised a profit of 400*l*.

About this time the Duchess of Queensberry (the poet Gay's celebrated Duchess) favoured George Anne with her patronage. Her first interview with the Duchess is most characteristic.

"Some days before that fixed for my benefit, I received a message whilst I was at the theatre, to be at Queensberry House the next day by twelve o'clock. As I thought it likewise incumbent on me to wait on the Countess of Cardigan, who had honoured me with equal marks of approbation, I dressed myself early, and, taking a chair, went first to Privy-Garden. I had there every reason to be pleased with the reception her ladyship gave me, who joined politeness to every virtue.

"But at Queensberry House my reception was far otherwise. Her Grace was determined to mortify my vanity before she promoted my interest. Quite elated with Lady Cardigan's flattering behaviour, I ordered the chairmen to proceed to Queensberry House. Soon after the rat-tat had been given, and my name announced to the porter, the groom of the chambers appeared. I desired him to acquaint her Grace that I was come to wait upon her. But how was I surprised when he returned, and informed me that her Grace knew no such person! My astonishment at this message was greatly augmented by the certainty I had entertained of a ready admittance. I assured

the domestic that it was by the Duchess's own directions I had taken the liberty to wait on her. To which he replied, that there must have been some mistake in the delivery of it. In this mortifying situation I had nothing to do but to return home."

Pondering upon this strange behaviour of her noble patroness, George Anne went to the theatre that evening, and upon entering the green-room was accosted by Prince Lobkowitz, who requested a box for her benefit for the *corps diplomatique*. She thanked him, informed him he should have a stage-box, and sent for the boxkeeper to tell him to look to the matter. How great was her surprise when he told her that she had not a box to dispose of; every one, save those of the Countess of Cardigan, the Duchess of Leeds, and Lady Shaftesbury, being retained for the Duchess of Queensberry! He further added, that the Duchess had sent for two hundred and fifty tickets. It is no wonder that Miss Bellamy was unable to account for the very cavalier treatment which she had received in the morning. But a further surprise awaited her. Upon her return from the theatre that evening, she found a note from her Grace desiring her to wait upon her during the forenoon of the next day.

"I was," she says, "notwithstanding so appre-

hensive of meeting with a second mortification, that I determined to *walk* to Queensberry House, to prevent any person being a witness to it, should it happen. I accordingly set out on foot, and was not totally free from perturbation when I knocked at the gate. I was, however, immediately ushered to her Grace's apartment, where my reception was as singular as my treatment had been the day before ; her Grace thus accosting me : ' Well, young woman ! What business had you in a chair yesterday ? It was a fine morning, and you might have walked. You look as you ought to do now ' (observing my linen gown). ' Nothing is so vulgar as wearing silk in a morning. Simplicity best becomes youth. And you do not stand in need of ornaments. Therefore, always dress plain, except when you are on the stage.'

" Whilst her Grace was talking in this manner to me, she was cleaning a picture ; which I officiously requested her permission to do, she hastily replied : ' Don't you think I have domestics enough if I did not choose to do it myself ? ' I apologised for my presumption, by informing her Grace that I had been for some time at Jones's, where I had been flattered that I had acquired a tolerable proficiency in that art. The Duchess upon this exclaimed—' Are you the girl I have heard Chesterfield speak of ? ' Upon my answering that I had

the honour of being known to his Lordship, she ordered a canvas bag to be taken out of her cabinet, saying, 'No person can give Queensberry less than gold. There are two hundred and fifty guineas, and twenty for the Duke's tickets and mine; but I must give you something for Tyrawley's sake.' She then took a bill from her pocket-book, which having put into my hands, she told me her coach was ordered to carry me home, lest any accident should happen to me, now I had such a charge about me."

The proceeds of her benefit far exceeded her most sanguine expectations. All expenses being deducted, the profits amounted to several hundred pounds. Splendid encouragement for a beginner!

As may readily be conjectured, the young, lovely, and gifted actress had many suitors. Chief amongst them, just about the time of her benefit, were Lord Byron (grand-uncle of the poet), and Sir George Metham.* She met them constantly at Quin's suppers, where it was patent to all what were the intentions of Lord Byron—nothing less than the desire to accomplish her fall from the paths of

* Sir George Metham was at this period only Mr. Montgomery: to avoid confusion we call him by the former name at once, as it is under that name alone that all Mrs. Bellamy's biographers speak of him.

prudence and virtue. Sir George Metham also ardently—but ambiguously—pressed his suit ; and at last the young lady told him plainly that she would listen to no proposals but those of marriage and a coach. He honestly told her that the first condition was impossible, as he was entirely dependent upon his father, whose consent he could not hope to procure ; and as for the second, he could not afford it. Under these circumstances, the young lady refused to have anything to say to him ; and he, ostensibly broken-hearted, retired to his father's place in Yorkshire.

Lord Byron was not so easily disposed of. He had the character of never having been refused by a woman, and his vanity was hurt at George Anne Bellamy's coldness, and determined to be revenged upon her. This episode is best given in her own words :—

“ His Lordship was very intimate with a person who was a disgrace to nobility, and whose name I shall conceal through tenderness to his family. This nobleman was Lord Byron's confidential friend, and to this friend Lord Byron committed the execution of his revenge.

“ His Lordship frequently called at Mrs. Jackson's, though much against my mother's inclinations. But as he had been constantly a dangler

behind the scenes during her engagement at the theatre, and had occasionally given her franks, she admitted his visits.

“ My mother had strictly enjoined me to break off my intimacy with the young lady who was the object of the Earl’s pursuit, on account of her levity ; and because, though by birth a gentlewoman, she had degraded herself by becoming the companion of a lady of quality who had frequently eloped from her lord.

“ My mother at this period was become a confirmed devotee. Religion engrossed so much of her time, that in the evening she was seldom visible. Upon this account, and from Mrs. Jackson’s accompanying me so frequently to Mrs. Quin’s suppers, that lady conferred a great part of the friendly regard she had once borne my mother to me. But alas ! I was not long to profit by this revolution. My happiness was to be as transient as the sunshine of an April day.

“ One Sunday evening, when this ignoble Earl well knew my mother would be engaged, he called to inform me that the young lady before mentioned was in a coach at the end of Southampton Street, and desired to speak with me. Without staying to put on my hat or gloves I ran to the coach ; where, to my unspeakable surprise, I found myself suddenly hoisted into it by his Lordship,

and that the coachman drove off as fast as the horses could gallop.

“My astonishment for some time deprived me of the power of utterance ; but when I was a little recovered, I gave free vent to my reproaches. These his Lordship bore with a truly philosophic indifference, calmly telling me that no harm was intended me ; and that I had better consent to make his friend Lord Byron happy, and be happy myself, than oppose my good fortune. To this he added, that his friend was shortly to be married to Miss Shaw, a young lady possessed of a very large fortune, which would enable him to provide handsomely for me. I was so struck with the insolence of this proposal, that I remained for some time quite silent.

“At length the coach stopped in a lonely place at the top of North Audley Street, fronting the fields. At that time Oxford Street did not extend so far as it does at present. Here the Earl got out, and took me into his house. He then went away, as he said, to prepare a lodging for me, which he had already seen at a mantua-maker’s in Broad Street, Carnaby Market, and to which he would come back and take me. He assured me the mistress of the house was a woman of character ; and added, with the most dreadful imprecations, that no violence was intended.

“His Lordship now left me. And as the fear of great evils banishes every lesser consideration, I determined to wait the result with all the patience I was possessed of. The dread of being left alone in that solitary place was nothing when compared with my apprehensions from the machinations of two noblemen so determined and so powerful. Terror, however, so totally overwhelmed my mind that I remained in a state of stupefaction.

“It was not long before his Lordship returned ; and with him came the last person I least expected to see—my own brother.* Good heavens ! what comfort at so critical a juncture did the sight of him afford me ! I instantly flew into his arms ; but was repulsed by him in so violent a manner that I fell to the ground. The shock of this unexpected repulse, just as I hoped to have found a protector in him, was more than my spirits were able to bear. It deprived me of my senses. On my return to sensibility the only object that presented itself to my view was an old female servant, who told me she had orders to convey me to the lodging which had been prepared for me.

“The first thing I did was to make inquiry concerning my brother’s coming so unexpectedly. I was informed by the old woman that he had be-

* This was Lieutenant O’Hara—a natural son of Lord Tyrawley.

stowed manual chastisement upon my ravisher. But as he seemed to suppose that I had consented to the elopement, he had declared he would never see me more, but leave me to my fate.

“The woman added that he had threatened the Earl and his associate with a prosecution, which had so intimidated her master, that he had given her orders to remove me out of his house as soon as possible, as my being found there might make against him.

“When we arrived in Broad Street, I discovered, to my great satisfaction, that the mistress of the house, whose name was Mirvan, worked for me as a mantua-maker, though I was till now unacquainted with her place of residence. I told her my story simply as it happened; and my appearance, as well as my eyes, which were much swelled with crying, was an undeniable testimony of the truth of my assertions.

“I afterwards learned the following circumstances relative to my brother, about whom I was more anxious than for myself, as I had a great affection for him. We had long expected him to return from sea, he having been abroad for some years; and by one of those extraordinary freaks of fortune which are not to be accounted for, he got to the top of Southampton Street just as the coach was driving off with me. I should have termed

his coming providential, had he not suffered his suspicions to get the better of his affection, and thus counteracted the apparent designs of Providence in affording me relief.

“ He had reached Southampton Street, as I have just said, nearly about the time I was forced into the coach, and ran to rescue the person thus treated, little imagining it was his own sister ; but the furious driving of the coachman rendered his designs abortive. Upon this, he proceeded to Mrs. Jackson’s house, and had scarcely inquired for me, than that lady cried out, ‘ Oh fly, sir, to her relief ; Lord —— has this moment run away with her.’ My brother hearing this, concluded I must have been the person he had just seen carried off. But knowing it would be impossible to overtake the coach, he thought it more prudent to go directly to the Earl’s house. Not finding him at home, he walked about within sight of the door till his Lordship returned, when he accosted him in the manner before related. From the Earl of ——’s, my brother went to Marlborough Street to Lord Byron’s; and accusing him of being concerned with the Earl in seducing his sister, his Lordship denied having any knowledge of the affair, which he solemnly asserted *upon his honour* ; declaring at the same time, as indeed he could do with a greater degree of truth, that he had not seen me that evening.

“My brother, placing an implicit confidence in the assertions of Lord Byron, grew enraged against me, without making any inquiries whether I was really culpable upon this occasion or not. Giving me over therefore as a lost, abandoned girl, he immediately set out for Portsmouth, and left me unprotected. This I may justly consider as the most unfortunate event I had hitherto experienced ; for, being deprived of his protection at a time when it was so extremely requisite to my re-establishment in life, I was left open to the attacks of every insolent pretender, whose audacity his very character, as he was distinguished for his bravery, would have repressed.”

It seems strange that George Anne Bellamy should remain quietly in this lodging without making any attempt to escape ; but the actions of a girl of fifteen or sixteen can scarcely be judged by the standard of mature experience. The scandal found its way into the newspapers, and even her own mother believed that her daughter's elopement had been voluntary. The latter wrote several letters to her mother, but owing to the duplicity of a relative living in the house, she never received one of them. Anxiety, and shame at her conduct being so misrepresented by the public press, caused a violent fever which brought her to the brink of the grave. The public scandal

utterly destroyed her professional reputation, and she was thrown upon the world without any ostensible means of living.

As soon as she was able to travel, she went to Essex on a visit to some Quaker relations of her mother's, who received her kindly and paid over to her a legacy of 200*l.*, upon condition that she would never go on the stage; she having carefully concealed from them that she had already embraced that profession. She kept up the deception for some time, but it was finally revealed to her relatives by her meeting with the famous Zachary Moore, one of the chief men of fashion of the day, who managed to get rid of 25,000*l.* a year, and at forty was glad to accept an ensigncy in a regiment at Gibraltar. Meeting her in company, a friend drew his attention to the charming Quaker; upon which he unheedingly exclaimed in amazement, "A Quaker, indeed! Why! it is Miss Bellamy the celebrated actress, who met with so much applause the last winter at Covent Garden Theatre!" As soon as the worthy broad-brims made this discovery, they at once turned her out, and she was obliged to seek shelter in a farmer's house. From this refuge she wrote to her mother, asking her to take her back. That pious lady consented to do so upon this occasion—for, had not the truant the sum of 200*l.*!

George Anne returned to London, and determined to live down the scandal concerning her involuntary elopement. She and her mother set out one morning to ask Rich for another engagement. On the way there they accidentally met Sheridan, then manager of the Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin. Could anything have been more opportune! Sheridan had come to London to raise recruits for the winter season; and upon being introduced to Miss Bellamy, at once expressed a desire to engage her. But mother and daughter recollected the obligations under which they were to Rich, and declined to come to any arrangement without first consulting him.

The brusque but good-hearted manager at once gave a very good proof of his disinterestedness. He advised the young actress, by all means, to accept Sheridan's proposal; pointing out to her the advantage of receiving instruction from so great a master. Moreover, he told her that she would have an opportunity of appearing in Dublin in a series of principal parts; a proceeding impossible on a London stage, the possession of parts—at that time—being considered as much the *property* of performers as their weekly salary. Indeed, if the manager dared to exercise his discretion, the popular actor or actress threatened to throw up his or her engagement. Even the autocratic

David Garrick—who was afraid of his life of a woman's tongue—trembled under the tyranny of Kitty Clive in this respect. She played *Portia* atrociously, yet he dared not take the part from her forcibly nor interdict her comic (?) interpolations in the trial scene! “I grieve to lose you, Kitty!” he sighed sentimentally when she retired. “You lie! Davie! you lie!” she retorted, “and you know you do. You would light up for joy, only the candles would cost you sixpence!”

Sheridan got together a brilliant company, and they all set out one morning from London by coach to Holyhead. Arrived at Chester, the chief part of the journey was now made upon horseback; and as the majority of the travellers—George Anne amongst the number—had never been on horseback before, various ludicrous incidents arose out of their inexperience. At Chester they were joined by a Mr. Crump, an Irish linen merchant, an Adonis of fifty, with an enormous fortune and a susceptible heart. He fell violently in love with the lively young actress, and after making several efforts at length summoned up courage thus to address her:—

“My dear Miss Bellamy,” said he, as they sat in the inn parlour at Bangor, “were you ever in love?”

“Oh yes, violently!” was the reply.

"Are you really attached to the person?" he inquired in some perturbation.

"For ever!" was the emphatic reply.

"It would perhaps be deemed impertinent," continued the gentleman, "were I to presume to ask with whom."

"It can be of no consequence to you, sir," said George Anne, with a melodramatic air; "but if it is, I will gratify your curiosity by informing you that it is *with myself*! I am a female Narcissus, and shall continue so."

The entrance of the rest of the company only gave the enamoured swain time to say, "Then I am satisfied."

In his "View of the Irish Stage," Hitchcock thus alludes to this first engagement of George Anne Bellamy in Dublin:—"Miss Bellamy, a young actress then rising rapidly into fame, was applied to, and such advantageous terms offered as she readily embraced. . . . It is certain she was then considered as a very valuable acquisition to the Irish stage."*

On the 11th of November, 1745, she made her first appearance upon the Dublin stage in the character of *Monimia*, in "The Orphan," the character in which she had first appeared, and

* Hitchcock's "View of the Irish Stage," vol. i. pp. 149-50.

scored such a success in Drury Lane with Quin. Barry played *Castalio*, and Sheridan supported her as *Chamont*. Her success was immediate, the public enthusiasm knew no bounds, and she soon became a reigning favourite. In private she was much noticed by Mrs. O'Hara, Lord Tyrawley's sister, by the Hon. Mrs. Butler, and by other women of rank and note. Garrick joined the company at this theatre in the December of the same year, in consequence of a dispute which he had had with Rich. No wonder the Dublin theatrical season of this year was a brilliant one, for three such capital performers as Garrick, Sheridan, and Barry in one company was a circumstance that had hardly ever before been known.

"King John" was the next play cast for performance at Smock Alley, and George Anne Bellamy, urged thereto privately by Sheridan, insisted upon playing *Constance*. Garrick objected to this, and refused to play in the piece if Miss Bellamy were cast for that character. Sheridan was obliged to give up to the great actor, and to let him have his way, much to the chagrin of the young lady. She had set her heart upon appearing as *Constance*, and accordingly flew to her lady patronesses in Dublin to complain of the treatment she had received. It was an unwise thing for her to have done, for Garrick had no private

pique against her, and used his theatrical judgment in objecting to so important a part as that of *Constance* being given to one who was, comparatively speaking, as yet a novice. But the hot-tempered actress determined to be revenged. She got her lady patronesses—notably Mrs. Butler—to send round to all their friends to request they would not go to the theatre the evening “King John” was performed. The scheme succeeded, the house was but one-third filled, and the receipts did not amount to forty pounds.

This was the first theatrical humiliation the immortal Roscius had ever experienced, and he severely repented preferring Mrs. Furnival,—who played the part of *Constance*,—to George Anne. But what completed her triumph was, that when the same play was again performed, with Sheridan as the *King*, Garrick as the *Bastard*, and Miss Bellamy as *Constance*, more people were turned away from the doors than could get places; and the dispute relative to the characters, which all Dublin was aware of, made the audience receive her with the warmest marks of approbation.

Notwithstanding this success, she was determined to return the mortification Garrick had been the cause of. She waited for an opportunity, which soon presented itself to her. The great tragedian was to have two benefits

during the season, and in order that they should not come too near each other, it was arranged that one of them should take place early in it. For the first benefit he had fixed upon the play of "Jane Shore," and asked Miss Bellamy to play that character. She absolutely refused; alleging as her excuse the objection he had made to her playing *Constance*—namely, her youth. Garrick expostulated and entreated, but the young lady was inexorable; and only yielded to the solicitations of her friend, Mrs. Butler. In connexion with this a ludicrous incident happened. Garrick had written a letter of entreaty to Miss Bellamy, in which he said that if she would only "oblige him he would write for her a *goody-goody* epilogue; which, with the help of her eyes, should do more mischief than ever the flesh or the devil had done since the world began." This ridiculous epistle he directed, "To My Soul's Idol, the Beautified Ophelia," and delivered it to his servant with orders to take it to Miss Bellamy. The messenger had some more agreeable amusement to pursue than going on his master's errands, and he gave it to a porter in the street, without having attended to the absurd address upon it. The porter, upon reading the superscription, and not knowing any lady throughout the whole city of Dublin who bore the title either of "My Soul's Idol" or "The

Beautified Ophelia," naturally concluded that the whole thing was a joke. He carried the missive to his master, who happened to be a newspaper proprietor, and by that means it got the next day into the public prints. Garrick—who was very sensitive of ridicule—was much annoyed at this; for it was tantamount to his making a public apology to the young actress.

At the close of the season Garrick returned to London with the rich harvest which had crowned his toils in Dublin. Upon the day of his departure he rode out to the Sheds of Clontarf, where Mrs. Bellamy and her daughter were staying for the benefit of the sea air and the bathing. Mrs. Butler and her daughter were there at the time, and the former presenting him with a sealed packet, said ceremoniously—"I here present you, Mr. Garrick, with something more valuable than life. In it you will read my sentiments; but I strictly enjoin you not to open it till you have passed the Hill of Howth." Garrick took the packet with a conceited and conscious air, confident that it contained some valuable present, and possibly a declaration of tender sentiments. What must have been his dismay, upon opening the packet, to find that it contained nothing more than "Wesley's Hymns" and "Dean Swift's Discourse on the Trinity," together with a short note, saying that he would

have leisure during his voyage to study the one and to digest the other. Annoyed and mortified, he offered both as a sacrifice to Neptune.

Miss Bellamy was now so great a favourite with the Dublin public that Sheridan re-engaged her for the ensuing season of 1746. Lord Chesterfield was at this time Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and took much notice of her ; so that her aristocratic connexions were of much value to the theatre upon benefit nights. The tragedy of "All for Love, or the World well Lost," was revived, and with it the theatre re-opened (1746) with Barry and Sheridan in their unrivalled characters of *Antony* and *Ventidius*. Some extraordinary incidents were connected with the getting-up of this play, which Miss Bellamy records in one of her letters. The whole affair presents a curious picture of the Dublin society of the day.

"The manager," says Miss Bellamy, "in an excursion he had made during the summer to London, had purchased a superb suit of clothes that had belonged to the Princess of Wales, and had been only worn by her on the birthday. This was made into a dress for me to play the character of *Cleopatra* ; and as the ground of it was silver tissue, my mother thought that by turning the body of it in, it would be no unbecoming addition to my waist, which was remarkably small. My

maid-servant was accordingly sent to the theatre to assist the dresser and mantua-maker in preparing it, and also in sewing on a number of diamonds, my patroness not only having furnished me with her own, but borrowed several others of her acquaintance for me. When the women had finished the work, they all went out of the room and left the door of it indiscreetly open.

“Mrs. Furnival (who owed me a grudge, on account of my eclipsing her, as the more favourable reception I met with from the public gave her room to conclude I did, and likewise for the stir which had been made last season about the character of *Constance*) accidentally passed by the door of my dressing-room in the way to her own, as it stood open. Seeing my rich dress thus lying exposed, and observing no person to prevent her, she stepped in and carried off the Queen of Egypt’s paraphernalia, to adorn herself in the character of *Octavia*, the Roman matron, which she was to perform. By remarking from time to time my dress, which was very different from the generality of heroines, Mrs. Furnival had just acquired taste enough to despise the black velvet in which those ladies were usually habited. And without considering the impropriety of enrobing a Roman matron in the habiliments of the Egyptian Queen, or perhaps not knowing that there was

any impropriety in it, she determined, for once in her lifetime, to be as fine as myself, and that at my expense ; she accordingly set to work to let out the clothes which, through my mother's economical advice, had been taken in.

“When my servant returned to the room, and found the valuable dress which had been committed to her charge missing, her fright and agitation were beyond expression. She ran like a mad creature about the theatre, inquiring of every one whether they had seen anything of it. At length she was informed that Mrs. Furnival had got possession of it ; when, running to that lady's dressing-room, she was nearly petrified at beholding the work, which had cost her so much pains, undone. My damsel's veins, unfortunately for Mrs. Furnival, were rich with the blood of the O'Bryens. Thus qualified, she at first demanded the dress with tolerable civility ; but meeting with a peremptory refusal, the blood of her great forefathers boiled within her veins, and without any more ado she fell tooth-and-nail upon poor Mrs. Furnival. So violent was the assault, that had not assistance arrived in time to rescue her from the fangs of the enraged Hibernian nymph, my theatrical rival would probably have never had an opportunity of appearing once in her life adorned with *real* jewels.

“When I came to the theatre, I found my servant dissolved in tears at the sad disaster; for notwithstanding her heroic exertions, she had not been able to bring off the cause of the contest. But so far was I from partaking of her grief, that I could not help being highly diverted at the absurdity of the incident. Nothing concerning a theatre could at that time affect my temper, except the disappointment I had met with in not appearing in the part of *Constance*. I sent indeed for the jewels, but the lady condescended to send me word that I should have them after the play.

“In this situation I had no other resource than to reverse the dresses, and appear as plain in the character of the luxurious Queen of Egypt as Antony’s good wife, although the sister of Caesar, ought to have been. In the room of precious stones, with which my dress should have been decorated, I substituted pearls; and of all my finery I retained only my diadem, that indispensable mark of royalty.

“Every transaction that takes place in the theatre, and every circumstance relative to it, are as well known in Dublin as they would be in a country town. The report of the richness and elegance of my dress had been universally the subject of conversation for some time before the night of performance, when, to the surprise of the

audience, I appeared in white satin. My kind patroness, who sat in the stage-box, seemed not to be able to account for such an unexpected circumstance. And not seeing me adorned with the jewels she had lent me, she naturally supposed I had reserved my regalia till the scene in which I was to meet my Antony.

“ When I had first entered the green-room, the manager, who expected to see me splendidly dressed, as it was natural to suppose the enchanting Cleopatra would have been upon such an occasion, expressed with some warmth his surprise at a disappointment, which he could only impute to caprice. Without being in the least discomposed by his warmth, I coolly told him that I had taken the advice Ventidius had sent me by Alexis, and had parted with both my clothes and jewels to Antony’s wife. Mr. Sheridan could not conceive my meaning, but as it was now too late to make any alteration he said no more upon the subject. He was not, however, long at a loss for an explanation ; for, going to introduce Octavia to the Emperor, he discovered the jay in all her borrowed plumes. An apparition could not have more astonished him. He was so confounded that it was some time before he could go on with his part. At the same instant Mrs. Butler exclaimed aloud, “ Good Heaven, the woman has got on my

diamonds!" The gentlemen in the pit concluded that Mrs. Butler had been robbed of them by Mrs. Furnival, and the general consternation occasioned by so extraordinary a scene is not to be described. But the audience, observing Mr. Sheridan to smile, they supposed there was some mystery in the affair, which induced them to wait with patience till the conclusion of the act. As soon as it was finished, they bestowed their applause upon Antony and his faithful veteran; but, as if they had all been animated by the same mind, they cried out, 'No more Furnival! No more Furnival!' The fine-dressed lady, disappointed of the acclamations she expected to receive on account of the grandeur of her habiliments, and thus hooted for the impropriety of her conduct, very prudently called fits to her aid, which incapacitated her from appearing again, and the audience had the good-nature to wait patiently till Mrs. Elmy, whom curiosity had led to the theatre, had dressed to finish the part. But the next night, either inspired by the brilliancy of my ornaments, or animated by the sight of his Excellency Lord Chesterfield, who, together with his lady, graced the theatre, it was the general opinion that I never played with so much spirit, or did greater justice to a character. The applause I received was universal."

In consequence of an insult which Miss Bellamy received upon this very night from a gentleman at the wing, Mr. Sheridan made a rule which was rigidly enforced—that no gentleman should be allowed behind the scenes. Lord Chesterfield obliged the offender, whose name was St. Ledger, to make a public apology for this breach of decorum.

During this season Miss Bellamy played all the chief female characters, and was as much respected in private as she was received with enthusiasm in public. One evening after she had performed *Lady Townley*, in the “Provoked Husband,” she received a card from Mrs. Butler, now residing for the season in Stephen’s Green, requesting her to come to her house as soon as she was at liberty, and to come without waiting to change her dress. She did so, and was much surprised to find the gentlemen alone spoke to her, not one of the ladies condescending to take the least notice of her. Even the lady whose guest she was only deigned to welcome her on her entrance with a formal bend of her head. Amazed and shocked at this reception, she went up to Mrs. O’Hara, and asked the cause of it. That lady replied that a few minutes would decide whether or not she should ever notice her again. At this juncture a stranger entered the room. He was a most attractive-

looking man, and at once singled out Miss Bellamy as the object of his attention. They talked on various matters for some time, the company evidently watching them. At length some one came up and interrupted the conversation, and the gentleman, going up to the hostess, earnestly inquired of her who the captivating fair one was. "Surely you must know her," said Mrs. Butler, half aloud; "I am certain you know her; nay, that you are well acquainted with her." In vain he protested that he did not know the young lady, assuring Mrs. Butler that he had never before seen her, and avowed that he now felt himself greatly interested in the inquiry. "Fie, fie, Mr. Medicott," returned Mrs. Butler, "what can you say for yourself, when I inform you *that this is the dear girl whose character you so cruelly aspersed at dinner!*"

Of course Miss Bellamy now saw what had been the cause of the coolness upon the part of the ladies. Her traducer hastily left the company, and Mrs. Butler, coming up to her young friend, took her by the hand, and said: "My dear child, you have gone through a fiery trial; but it was a very necessary one. This gentleman had vilely traduced your character. We were all perfectly convinced that you did not merit what he said of you; but had he seen you first at the theatre here,

he would doubtlessly have maintained his assertions with oaths, and there would have been no possibility of contradicting him, however favourably we may have thought of you, notwithstanding."

Miss Bellamy had been ailing for some time previously, and this, coupled with the annoyance of this little episode, caused a fever, which incapacitated her from playing for some while. When at length she was able to attend the theatre, a disagreeable event happened which retarded her perfect recovery, and, with some other concurrent circumstances, was the cause of her leaving Ireland.

Again she was subject to an assault from a person who intruded behind the scenes, despite Mr. Sheridan's strict orders that no strangers should be admitted. This man, whose name was Kelly, tried to force the door of her dressing-room, and was obliged to be forcibly removed by order of Sheridan. The offender took his place in the pit, and the play proceeded until the first scene of the last act, when an orange or apple was thrown at Mr. Sheridan, with such force that dented the iron of the false nose, which the part he was playing required him to wear, into his forehead.

Sheridan, who, besides being born and bred a gentleman, possessed as much personal courage as any man breathing, immediately stopped the

further performance of the piece, and ordered the curtain down. Kelly, foolishly for himself, again intruded behind the scenes, and Sheridan, hearing he was the one who had been the cause of all the disturbance, gave him a good thrashing. The victim slunk away to Lucas's Coffee House, and there, giving his own version of the affair, enlisted the Dublin bucks, who frequented that resort, upon his side. The next evening they visited the theatre, and no sooner did Sheridan make his appearance, than they exclaimed, "Out with the ladies, and down with the house." A most disgraceful riot took place, during which the ring-leaders jumped upon the stage, and Sheridan narrowly escaped with his life. They even penetrated to Miss Bellamy's dressing-room, and it was with difficulty two or three of her gentlemen friends preserved her from insult, and saw her safely home in her chair.

The Dublin magistrates, having reason to apprehend that greater mischief would ensue if the Smock Alley Theatre were kept open, ordered it to be shut up again until the benefits commenced. But the affair did not end there. The College boys, in order to revenge the cause of their fellow-student, Sheridan, as well as to show their resentment at being deprived of their favourite amusement, invited Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. Kelly,

and several other ringleaders of the rioters to breakfast at Trinity College. Having once got the fire-eaters into their hands, the students put them under the College pump, and gave them cold water enough to keep their heads perfectly cool to defend their cause against the manager, who had that day commenced a prosecution against them. The linen merchant, Mr. Crump, had been most assiduous in his attentions during Miss Bellamy's engagement in Dublin, and her mother did all in her power to further the suit of this Adonis of fifty; but without success. One of her numerous admirers, named Jephson, addressed the following lines to her upon her leaving Dublin at the termination of the season:—

Hail child of Nature, and the pride of Art!
Equally formed to glad and pain the heart;
'Thro' various passions you accomplish'd shine,
Your looks expressive speak the coming line.
Ador'd while living, with applause you die;
Each Judge beholds you with a Jaffir's eye.

Allusion is made in these lines to her appearing in the character of *Belvidera*, in which she scored a success.

During this visit to Dublin, Miss Bellamy had become acquainted with the Gunnings, the famous Irish beauties who were so poor that they were obliged to borrow Peg Woffington's court-dresses to appear at the drawing-rooms of Dublin

Castle. Of them, Horace Walpole wrote in 1751:—

“There are two Irish girls of no fortune, who are declared the handsomest women alive. I think there being two so handsome, and both such perfect figures, is their chief excellence, for singly I have seen much handsomer figures than either; however, they can’t walk in the park, or go to Vauxhall, but such mobs follow them that they are therefore driven away.”

Miss Bellamy was returning from rehearsal one day, when she heard cries proceeding from a house in Britain Street. She went in to inquire the cause, and found a lady and two beautiful young girls in much distress, as the bailiffs were in the house. The lady was Mrs. Gunning, and the two girls were the afterwards famous Maria and Elizabeth. Through the instrumentality of the actress they were released from their difficulties. Their romantic story merits a separate notice.

When Miss Bellamy returned to London, she accepted an engagement with her old friend Rich; and on the 22nd of October, 1748, she appeared in Covent Garden Theatre as *Belvidera*. “Miss Bellamy, her 1st appearance here for 3 years—she has been in Ireland,” says the manuscript play-bill in the British Museum. Quin received her with his customary kindness, and Lord Tyrawley

having again returned to England, he endeavoured to bring about a reconciliation between the young actress and her father. Mrs. Woffington, now in the zenith of her career, was also acting in the same theatre at this time, and from the playbills we gather that they frequently acted in the same plays. They both played in Dryden's "All for Love," upon the occasion of Quin's benefit, early in the season of 1748-1749, Miss Bellamy sustaining the part of *Octavia*, and Mrs. Woffington that of *Cleopatra*. The Duchess of Queensberry was in the theatre upon the occasion, and sent round to Miss Bellamy to say that she had much curiosity to visit the green-room, which she had heard was superior to many fashionable saloons for the wit and politeness to be met with there. Miss Bellamy took her patroness behind the scenes as soon as ever the performance was over. Conceive the horror of the former when, on opening the door, there was revealed to them the lovely Woffington, still crowned and robed as the Egyptian Queen, flourishing a foaming pot of porter in her hand, and vociferating, "Confusion to order! Let liberty thrive!" A congenial party surrounded the table, which was covered with mutton-pies. The disenchanted Duchess stood aghast for a moment, and then retired abruptly, muttering—"Is hell broke loose?" The next day, when Miss

Bellamy called to apologise, her Grace smiled, and said, "Really, from what I saw last night, I should think that in taste and delicacy the Norwood gipsies are at least on a par with the accomplished ladies of the theatre."

Lord Byron, although recently married to a young and charming wife, again persecuted her with his unwelcome attentions; but was repulsed by the prompt measures adopted by both Rich and Quin, and it would have been well for George Anne Bellamy if she had always attended to the advice of these two most faithful and disinterested monitors. Up to this date, her private reputation was stainless, notwithstanding the many and great temptations to which she was exposed.

Lord Tyrawley now exercised his parental authority, and peremptorily desired her to make up her mind to marry the husband he had selected for her, who was no other than Mr. Crump, the linen merchant. This she decidedly refused to do.

It was the turning-point of her life. Sir George Metham again came upon the scene just at this juncture, and Miss Bellamy took her part in an oft-acted farce in real life, for she eloped with him under promise of marriage. It was towards the end of May, 1749, when she was playing one evening in "The Provoked Wife," that Metham

came to the stage-door and said he had a carriage ready to take her away, and a furnished house prepared for her. At the end of the fourth act she eloped with him, without waiting to change her dress, and left the actors in the lurch. When called for to appear in the last scene, she could not be found, and Quin had the unpleasant task of making excuses to the audience. In his blunt way he told them that they must do without the fantastical girl of quality, who had left *Heartfree* (her lover in the play), *upon finding an admirer that was made on purpose for her*. This latter was in allusion to one of her own speeches in the first act.

Metham took her to a house in Leicester Street, Leicester Fields, and here they lived for some time. They then removed to York; and in the December of the same year, George Anne Bellamy's first and favourite child, George, was born prematurely. They were soon involved in many difficulties; for Metham was an inveterate gambler, and the lady was no economist. Absolute necessity obliged her to appeal again to Rich to give her an engagement. The wary manager sounded the public mind upon the subject, and, finding that her escapade was likely to be forgiven, he again engaged her at a salary of 7*l.* per week, and a benefit during the season.

On the 23rd of January, 1750, although as yet scarcely recovered from her recent illness, she re-appeared at Covent Garden as *Belvidera*, and was enthusiastically received. On the 1st of March following she played *Juliet* to the *Romeo* of John Lee, father of the two Misses Lee, one of whom wrote the comedy of "The Chapter of Accidents," and the novel of "The Recess;" and the other, "The New Canterbury Tales." Her name frequently appears in the bills until the close of the season.

Debt and difficulties of many kinds surrounded George Anne and the father of her child. The gentleman was an incurable gambler, and at length they were again compelled to retire to York, and live quietly for a time. Here they made the acquaintance of several men of rank and fashion, who each contributed 1000*l.*, and they set up a Faro-bank. Miss Bellamy raised the amount necessary by pawning her jewels. The result proved a great success; for, in a short time, Miss Bellamy redeemed her diamonds, paid her debts, and found herself several hundred pounds in pocket.

However, this doubtful manner of procuring money had to be abruptly relinquished, for Garrick offered George Anne an engagement at Drury Lane; and she was too sensible not to accept it.

This season of 1750-51 is memorable for the rivalry between the great London theatres—Barry and Cibber at the one, Garrick and Bellamy at the other. Puffing was resorted to, and the houses filled with paper. Garrick was the victor, but only by a single night.

From this, until 1753, Miss Bellamy acted frequently, and was always well received. Sir George Metham had been uniformly unfortunate at play, and upon her had devolved the entire expense of keeping both him and their child. She had taken a house at Richmond, but was obliged to give it up; so they returned to London, and took lodgings in King Street.

In 1753 Dr. Young's tragedy of "The Brothers" was acted, for the sake of giving the profits to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Miss Bellamy, who played the *Princess Erixe*, objected to the line—

I'll speak in thunder to you—

which she considered absurd. The obstinate and eccentric author insisted that it was the most forcible line in the piece. "It would be more so," she remarked, "if you added lightning." Upon this he lost his temper, and declared it was the best play he had ever written. With true feminine tact she reminded him of "The Revenge," and

threw the oil of flattery upon the foaming waters of his wrath. He strode up and down the room several times, then seized his pen, struck out the line, and ended by inviting himself home to dinner with the fair critic—a bold step for a reverend divine, and the author of the “Night Thoughts.” Quin was of the party. The Doctor mentioned the little fracas which had occurred in the green-room. “Oh,” replied Quin, calmly, “if you only knew what that girl can do as well as say, you would cease to be surprised at anything relative to her.”

George Anne had now lived for about three years with Sir George Metham, and he had never said anything about making her his wife. One day she asked him, point-blank, when he intended to marry her. He made no reply, but abruptly left the house. In a short time he returned with a lawyer, not, however, to draw up the marriage contract, but to settle upon her an allowance of 300*l.* a year, and the sum of 2000*l.* on their son George. To her faithful friend, Quin, she applied for advice in this matter. “If you were actually married,” said he, “you could not assume his name while you continue on the stage; and it will be necessary for you to pursue that profession as long as Mr. Metham’s father lives. If you remain attached to each other, I cannot see of what real service the

ceremony would be with regard to outward appearance." She acted upon his advice, and did not press the matter. Her domestic troubles by no means prevented her from diligently pursuing her profession. She was the fashion; people followed her, and she brought good houses. "I came to admire Garrick!" exclaimed the great Lord Mansfield one day, "but I go away enchanted with Bellamy."

On one occasion "Lear" was performed by command of His Majesty George II., and Miss Bellamy appeared as *Cordelia* in it. She was naturally anxious to obtain some compliment from the royal auditor, either to her person or her talent. But all that could be extracted from that matter-of-fact sovereign, who hated "Bainting and Boetry," was, "She wears a prodigious hoop!" At this time actresses played tragic and heroic parts in the fashionable costume of their own times. Mrs. Delany says that, in Dublin, the effect of Mrs. Woffington's *Maria* was greatly marred by the immoderate size of her hoops.

But Sir George Metham was not the only admirer whose addresses she tolerated at this time. Count Haslang, one of the foreign ambassadors, Mr. Digges (a well-known actor), Mr. Calcraft, and even the Hon. Mr. Fox, were amongst her suitors. She was not very cruel to this varied list of wor-

shippers, and in her *Memoirs* coolly chronicles her many embarrassments in trying to keep them apart. Sir George Metham, in a fit of jealousy, abruptly left her one day, and she forthwith solaced herself by entering into an engagement with the most persevering of her suitors, Mr. Calcraft—a person of much wealth, and a peculiarly odious character. He made some plausible excuse for not marrying her immediately, but bound himself to do so within six or seven years, or forfeit fifty thousand pounds. With this man she lived for some time, and at length—probably becoming tired of him—she professed to be very much astonished to find he was already married, and that therefore his promise to her was of none effect. With her customary straining after effect and notoriety at any cost, she assumed the tone of an injured maiden, had the whole affair, with a copy of the engagement to pay the fifty thousand pounds, printed; but Calcraft was too wary for her, and he succeeded in suppressing the pamphlet at the time.

No notice of this actress would be complete without giving the story of “*The Chicken Gloves*.”

“Having been much complimented upon the beauty of my hand, and my vanity not being a little augmented thereby, I determined to try every art in my power to render it more con-

spicuously white, and more worthy of the praises that had been bestowed upon it. Accordingly, in order to attain this grand point, which I then thought of the utmost consequence, I sent to Warren's, the perfumer's, *for a pair of chicken gloves*.

"When I had obtained these wonder-working coverings, I drew them on as I went to rest, and with some difficulty prevailed on Clifford to fasten my hands to the bed's head, to accelerate the wished-for effect. Thus manacled, and pleasing myself with the expectation of finding my project succeed, I fell asleep. But, O dire to tell! I had not become the vassal of Morpheus above two hours, when I awoke and found that I had totally lost the use of my right hand.

"Alarmed by the accident, I hastily called my maid, who lay in an adjacent room, to come and unshackle me; and finding, when my arms were at liberty, that my apprehensions were too true, I ordered her to send immediately for one of the faculty. In about half an hour a gentleman came, and, being informed of the terrible calamity that had befallen me, and the dreadful disappointment I had experienced, he, laughing, told me that he would take such methods as would effectually cure my white hand. And this he executed according to the letter of his promise, for he applied to my arm a mustard blister, which extended from my

shoulder to my fingers'-ends. An application that was not only attended with excruciating pain, but was productive of great mortification, for both the public and myself were debarred from the pleasure of viewing the beauty I so much prided myself in for a long time, as I was obliged to wear gloves during the remainder of the winter."

The good-natured Woffington had little in common with the vain and selfish George Anne Bellamy. The stories of their rivalries and jealousies are endless, and frequently most childish. Their green-room squabbles were usually town talk; and the famous quarrel—which resulted in their never again speaking to one another off the stage—has been recorded by Foote in one of his pieces of the day, and has been already given in full in the memoir of Mrs. Woffington.

Apart from the license of her conduct, George Anne Bellamy's besetting sin seems to have been her wasteful extravagance. She never dreamt of denying herself anything, and was in constant danger at this time of being arrested for debt. Her life was a strange mixture of hardship, pleasure, and adventure. Although publicly patronised by women of standing, she was no longer sought after in private. For a long time, with her customary *finesse*, she attempted to extenuate her conduct, and adopted the *rôle* of an injured woman;

but her wiles did not succeed, her behaviour being too notorious; so she at length calmly accepted her situation. Although but little past thirty years of age, the reckless way in which she had been living had so injured her appearance that she could scarcely procure an engagement, and the once peerless beauty was contemptuously offered six pounds a week by Colman. This downfall was owing to herself. Her reckless love of pleasure and dissipation had led her to neglect her profession. She had once almost shared the throne assumed by Mrs. Cibber, but she wanted the sustained zeal and anxious study of that lady, and cared not, as Mrs. Cibber did, for one quiet abiding home, but sighed for change, had it, and suffered for it.

Mossop was now the proprietor of the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin. A rival theatre had been opened in Aungier Street, and Mossop hoped to turn public feeling in his favour by bringing over Miss Bellamy, who had been formerly such an attraction in Dublin. He offered her one thousand pounds for the season of 1760—an offer she was not slow to accept. In doing so he relied upon the tradition of thirteen years before, when the grace and beauty of George Anne, quite as much as her dramatic powers, were powerful attractions. Mossop had not seen her, or he certainly would

never have made such a liberal offer. In expectation of the beautiful Miss Bellamy, of whom they had heard so much, the students of Trinity College were assembled to see her alight from the coach. At length the long-expected phenomenon made her appearance. But how different from the lively and lovely girl who had alighted in the same place thirteen years previously ! Fancy a dirty little creature, bent nearly double, enfeebled by fatigue, her countenance tinged with jaundice, and in every respect the reverse of a person who could make the least pretensions to beauty. A profound silence reigned ; they looked at her pityingly, and dispersed without a word.

Tate Wilkinson, in his admirable and moderately-written Memoirs, gives the following account of George Anne's reception at the theatre :—

“ Mossop, as manager, made his first appearance as *Pierre*, in “ Venice Preserved ;” *Belvidera*, Mrs. Bellamy, being the first night of her performing. Expectation was so great that the house filled as fast as the people could thrust in with or without paying. On speaking her first line behind the scene—

Lead me, ye virgins, lead me to that kind voice,—

it struck the ears of the audience as uncouth and unmusical ; yet she was received, as was prepared and determined by all who were her or Mr.

Mossop's friends, and the public at large, with repeated plaudits on her *entrée*. But the roses were fled! the young, the once lovely Bellamy was turned haggard! and her eyes, that used to charm all hearts, appeared sunk, large, hollow, and ghastly. O Time! Time! thy glass should be often consulted! for before the first short scene had elapsed, disappointment, chagrin, and pity sat on every eye and countenance.

"By the end of the third act they were all (like Bobadil) planet-struck; the other two acts hobbled through. Mossop was cut to the heart, and never played *Pierre* (one of his best parts) so indifferently as on that night. The curtain dropped, and poor Bellamy never after drew a single house there. She left Dublin without a single friend to regret her loss. What a change from the days of her youth! and as an actress of note, her name never more ranked in any theatre, nor did she ever again rise in public estimation." Tate Wilkinson is invariably so scrupulously exact, that this account may be taken as a good estimate of the true state of affairs.

George Anne Bellamy had a mania for incurring debt. Whilst in Dublin her salary was fifty guineas a week, yet she never had a shilling beforehand. Her former suitor, Mr. Crump, sent her in a bill for 400*l.*, "for wine and other articles;"

and she, being unable to pay, was arrested, and her part had to be read that evening at the theatre. She was now living under the protection of the actor Digges, and between him and Mossop they managed to get her liberated.

Such was the life she now led. As her physical charms rapidly decayed, she found more and more difficulty in procuring an engagement. Debt and embarrassments increased, and at last frequent arrests in the open streets became quite common affairs with her. In her distress, she gladly accepted the situation of housekeeper to Count Haslang (one of her former lovers), whose suite, as belonging to an ambassador, enjoyed immunity from all law process. With her customary fickleness, she left the protection of this nobleman—who, of all her former admirers, was the only one who showed any kindness to the decayed beauty*—and then came fresh troubles: short and unsuccessful engagements—battles with creditors—the sale of her jewels and dresses—and, finally, residence within the Rules.

At length, through the bounty and kindness of some of her friends of yore, to whom she applied, she was released; and the once beautiful and

* Woodward, the actor, and another old lover, are both said to have left her legacies, but Mrs. Bellamy never received them.

fascinating Bellamy became the occupant of two rooms adjoining the "Dog and Duck," which she rented at twelve shillings a week.

What a condition for the lovely and gifted actress to come to ! Few women in her profession ever set out in life under more brilliant auspices, and she was wrecked upon the sands and shoals of her own imprudence and vanity. The rest of her life presents a painful picture of begging, squalor, and destitution. In 1785 she published her famous "Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy," and this, in consequence of the many illustrious names mentioned in it, was somewhat of a pecuniary success for the publisher, and succeeded in bringing Mrs. Bellamy's name before the public. A benefit was arranged for her, of which the following account is given by Reynolds :—

"I dwell for a moment on a last appearance which I witnessed—namely, that of Mrs. Bellamy, who took her leave of the stage May 24th, 1785. On this occasion, Miss Farren, the present Countess of Derby, spoke an address which concluded with the following couplet—

But see oppress'd with gratitude and tears,
To pay her dueous tribute she appears.

"The curtain then ascended, and Mrs. Bellamy being discovered, the whole house immediately arose to mark their favourable inclinations towards

her, and from anxiety to obtain a view of this once celebrated actress, and, in consequence of the publication of her life, then celebrated authoress. She was seated in an armchair, from which she in vain attempted to rise, so completely was she subdued by her feelings. She, however, succeeded in muttering a few words, expressive of her gratitude, and then, sinking into her seat, the curtain dropped before her.”*

Three years afterwards the curtain dropped upon the drama of her strange and eventful life. Her loves, caprices, charms, extravagances, farotable keeping, and sufferings, excited the wonder, pity, and contempt of the town for upwards of thirty years. Yet fashion thought no ill of her—during her prosperity—and male and female aristocrats stood sponsors for her children. She was a syren who went to ruin with each successive victim, but she rose from the wreck more beautiful and bewitching than ever. She was so beautiful, had eyes of such soft and loving a blue, unequalled for the expression of unbounded and rapturous love, was so marvellously fair, and was altogether so irresistible a sorceress, that she was universally loved as a woman by those whom she could

* On this occasion, one of the chief characters was played by Miss Catley, another distinguished Irish actress.

beguile, and admired as an actress. Tate Wilkinson says she died in a debtors' prison, a thing which is not at all unlikely. In the obituary column of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February 16th, 1788, the following notice occurs:—

“Mrs. George Anne Bellamy, formerly a celebrated actress, a woman who had seen many vicissitudes of fortune, and latterly experienced much distress.”

In nearly the same words is her death recorded under the same date in the *Scot's Magazine*, with the more specific notice that she died “in London.” In the *European Magazine*, for 1788, her death is also mentioned. All the dates agree.

A portrait of her hangs in the Garrick Club, the most striking feature in the face being the eyes. We know not where she was buried, who attended, or who paid the expenses of the funeral.





“PERDITA.”

(MRS. ROBINSON.)

BORN 1758. DIED 1800.



LITTLE more than one hundred years ago, when Beau Brummell was yet a little boy, and the First Gentleman in Europe had not earned the distinction of being called his “fat friend,” when the latter was colonel of the most famous regiment of fops that ever existed (the 10th Hussars) ; before the wicked Lord Lyttelton had quarrelled with George Ayscough, or had broken off his engagement with Miss Warburton, “who was,” according to him, “as cold as an anchorite ; formed to be the best wife in the world to a good husband, but by no means calculated to reform a bad one ;” about this time, the famous Lord Lyttelton and his friend, George Ayscough, sauntered one evening into the Pantheon Rotunda, to have a look at, and a chat with, the beauties and beaux usually to be found congregated there.

Nominally, a concert was the excuse for the gathering together of this brilliant assemblage. The first women of fashion of the day were amongst

the audience—from the first Countess of Tyrconnell, with her pretty brogue, to the sleepy-eyed, lovely, and voluptuous-looking Lady Almeria Carpenter, and the magnificent Marchioness of Townshend. The gay young nobleman and his boon companion mingled with the brilliant throng, where doubtless Mary Warburton—who was at that time betrothed to the former—jealously watched the flirtations of her erratic and susceptible affianced husband. To the same pretty face constant never, Lord Lyttelton was beginning to find the familiar society pall, when he suddenly gave a start, and grasping his friend's arm, earnestly inquired—

“Who is she?”

The object of his inquiry was a pretty young girl, in a plain round cap, over which was tied a white chip hat, and her dress was of pink trimmed with sable. The two gallants stared at her so persistently—in those days it was considered a compliment to a woman to stare her out of countenance—that she became quite disconcerted;—she got used to these gallantries very soon,—and taking the arm of the gentleman who accompanied her, she walked away in the opposite direction.

But Lord Lyttelton and George Ayscough had come, had seen, and had been conquered by the beauty and grace of the mysterious fair one. They

pursued her and her companion round the circle where the company promenaded whilst listening to the music, now and again stopping their various friends and demanding of them who the stranger was. But although everybody wanted to know, yet nobody knew, until the Earl of Northington, looking critically at the young lady, said dubiously, "Ye-es ; I *think* I know her." And leaving his companions, advanced with a bow, saying—

"Miss Darby—or I am mistaken?"

The young lady has left it upon record, "that my manner and confusion plainly evinced that I was not accustomed to the gaze of impertinent high-breeding." We are willing to give her the benefit of any doubt we may privately cherish, and state upon her own authority that she replied that her name was now changed to Robinson, and "to prevent any awkward embarrassment," she presented her husband, upon whose arm she was leaning.

In such wise did the famous "Perdita" make her first appearance in London society.

An Irishwoman—born in Bristol, in 1758, right in the shadow of Saint Mary Redclyffe—Mary Darby was the daughter of a speculator, named MacDermott, which name he subsequently changed to that of Darby. He went off on some visionary enterprise to North America, and came back in a

few years without either money or credit. During his absence, his daughter Mary had been at a school kept by the sisters of the famous Hannah More ; and his wife, who had removed to London, had opened a school there, in order to try and support her other children. In this enterprise she was helped by her daughter Mary, now a girl of about fifteen.

She was a very pretty and intelligent girl, but gave early proof that the lessons of gravity and of female propriety, which we may be sure the Misses More endeavoured to implant in her youthful mind, had fallen upon stony ground. Did they ever know of it, it must have shocked the sense of decorum of these good spinsters to learn that their quondam pupil actually flirted from the windows with a young man, who lodged in a house opposite to the one occupied by her mother in Southampton Buildings.

Mary Darby did more than flirt with this young man—she married him, and thus became Mrs. Robinson just at the time that her dancing-master had made her show off before the veteran Garrick, who was so pleased with her dancing and recitations that he was about to allow her to appear in a piece with him at Covent Garden. Mr. Robinson seems to have won the consent of the pretty Mary's mother by flattering the good lady's little

foibles, and by sundry presents of books—they were gifts of value in those days—notably a copy of Hervey's *Meditations*. At first he insisted upon the marriage being kept secret, alleging as an excuse his fear of displeasing a rich uncle in Wales, from whom he had expectations.

But at length the true story came out. The rich uncle was apocryphal—he was in reality a Mr. Harris, and the so-called Mr. Robinson was his illegitimate son. He invited the bride and bridegroom on a visit to Wales, and they accepted the invitation. In her quaintly-written “*Confessions*”—which she wrote in after years—Mrs. Robinson gives the following graphic account of the visit :—

“Mr. Harris came out to receive me. I wore a dark claret-coloured riding-habit, with a white beaver hat and feathers. He embraced me with excessive cordiality, while Miss Robinson, my husband's sister, with cold formality led me into the house. I never shall forget her looks or her manner. Had her brother presented the most abject being to her, she could not have taken my hand with a more frigid demeanour. Miss Robinson, though not more than twenty years of age, was Gothic in her appearance, and stiff in her deportment; she was of low stature, and clumsy, with a countenance peculiarly formed for the expression of sarcastic vulgarity—a short snub nose,

turned up at the point, a head thrown back with an air of *hauteur*, a gaudy-coloured chintz gown, a thrice-bordered cap, with a profusion of ribands, and a countenance somewhat more ruddy than was consistent with even pure health, presented the personage whom I was to know as my future companion and kinswoman.

"Mr. Harris looked like a venerable Haythorn ; a brown fustian coat, a scarlet waistcoat edged with narrow gold, a pair of woollen spatterdashes, and a gold-laced hat, formed the dress he generally wore. He always rode a small Welsh pony, and was seldom in the house, excepting at meal-time, from sunrise to the close of the evening.

"There was yet another personage in the domestic establishment, who was by Mr. Harris regarded as of no small importance ; this was a venerable housekeeper, of the name of Mary Edwards. Mrs. Molly was the female mentor of the family. She dined at the table with Mr. Harris, she was the governess of the domestic department, and a more overbearing, vindictive spirit never inhabited the heart of mortal than that which pervaded the soul of the ill-natured Mrs. Molly.

"It may be easily conjectured that my time passed heavily in this uninteresting circle. I was condemned either to drink ale with 'the Squire,'

for Mr. Harris was only spoken of by that title, or to visit the methodistical seminary which Lady Huntingdon had established at Trevecca, another mansion-house on the estate of Mr. Harris. Miss Robinson was of this sect, and though Mr. Harris was not a disciple of the Huntingdonian school, he was a constant church visitor on every Sunday. His zeal was indefatigable, and he would frequently fine the rustics (for he was a justice of the peace, and had been sheriff of the county) when he heard them swear, though every third sentence he uttered was attended by an oath that made his hearers shudder.

“I soon became a considerable favourite with the Squire, but I did not find any yielding qualities about the hearts of Miss Betsy or Mrs. Molly. They observed me with jealous eyes ; they considered me an interloper, whose manner attracted Mr. Harris’s esteem, and who was likely to diminish their divided influence in the family. I found them daily growing weary of my society ; I perceived their sidelong glances when I was complimented by the visiting neighbours on my good looks, or taste in the choice of my dresses. Miss Robinson rode on horseback in a camlet safeguard, with a high-crowned bonnet. I wore a fashionable habit, and looked like something human. Envy at length assumed the form of insolence, and I was taunted perpetually on the

folly of appearing like a woman of fortune, that a lawyer's wife had no right to dress like a duchess, and that, though I might be very accomplished, a good housewife had no occasion for harpsichords and books, they belonged to women who had brought wherewithal to support them. Such was the language of vulgar illiberal natures ! Yet for three weeks I endured it patiently.

"Knowing that Mr. Harris was disposed to think favourably of me—that he even declared he should 'have liked me for his wife, had I not married Tom,' though he was then between sixty and seventy years of age—I thought it prudent to depart, lest through the machinations of Miss Betsy and Mrs. Molly I should lose the share I had gained in his affections. My mother was still at Bristol, and the morning of our departure being arrived, to my infinite astonishment Mr. Harris proposed accompanying us thither. It was in vain that Molly and Miss interfered to prevent him ; he swore that he would see me safe across the Channel, whatever might be the consequence of his journey. We set out together.

"After passing many days at Bristol, Mr. Harris returned to Wales, and our party set out for London. Mr. Robinson's mind was easy, and his hopes were confirmed by the kindness of his uncle ; he now considered himself as the most happy of mortals. We removed from Great Queen

Street to a house, No. 13, in Hatton Garden, which had been recently built. Mr. Robinson furnished it with peculiar elegance. I frequently inquired into the extent of his finances, and he as often assured me that they were in every respect competent to his expenses. In addition to our domestic establishment, Mr. Robinson purchased a handsome phaeton, with saddle-horses for his own use. And I now made my *début*, though scarcely emerged beyond the boundaries of childhood, in the broad hemisphere of fashionable folly."

It is at this point in her history that Mary Robinson first met Lord Lyttelton and his friend George Ayscough at the Pantheon Rotunda. They followed up the introduction by calling upon her the next day. Lord Lyttelton—the most accomplished libertine of his time—ostensibly courted the husband instead of the wife, professing esteem and admiration for him, and an earnest desire to cultivate his acquaintance. The picture Mrs. Robinson gives of this nobleman is not by any means flattering. She says :—

"Lord Lyttelton was uniformly my aversion. His manners were overbearingly insolent, his language licentious, and his person slovenly, even to a degree that was disgusting."

Although, further on in her Memoirs, Mrs. Robinson tells us that she "abhorred, decidedly

abhorred," Lord Lyttelton, yet she seems to have had no scruples about taking presents from him. He wrote poetry to her, for which she says he had "considerable facility," and he also constituted himself her *cavaliere servente* at all places of amusement. It is significant that she says very little about being ever introduced to any ladies, but records the names of the chief men of fashion of the day; Count de Belgiose, the Imperial Ambassador, "one of the most accomplished foreigners I ever remember to have met;" Lord Valentia, Captain O'Byrne, Mr. William Brereton of Drury Lane Theatre, Sir Francis Molyneux, Mr. Alderman Sayer, George Robert Fitzgerald, and many others.

About this time she begins to complain of the neglect of her husband; and it must honestly be admitted that her position was a trying one. Young, beautiful, talented and,—it cannot be denied—intensely vain, and treated with indifference by him who was her natural protector, she was thrown into the constant companionship of the most licentious and fascinating men of the age. She says herself:—

"Among the most dangerous of my husband's associates was George Robert Fitzgerald.* His

* The famous "Fighting Fitzgerald."

manners towards women were interesting and attentive. He perceived the neglect with which I was treated by Mr. Robinson, and the pernicious influence which Lord Lyttelton had acquired over his mind ; he professed to feel the warmest interest in my welfare, lamented the destiny which had befallen me, in being wedded to a man incapable of estimating my value, and at last confessed *himself* my most ardent and devoted admirer. I shuddered at the declaration, for amidst all the allurements of splendid folly my mind, the purity of my virtue, was still uncontaminated.

“I repulsed the dangerous advances of this accomplished person ; but I did not the less feel the humiliation to which a husband’s indifference had exposed me. God can bear witness to the purity of my soul, even surrounded by temptations and mortified by neglect. Whenever I ventured to inquire into pecuniary resources, Mr. Robinson silenced me by saying he was independent ; added to this assurance, Lord Lyttelton repeatedly promised that, through his courtly interest, he would very shortly obtain for my husband some honourable and lucrative situation.

“I confess that I reposed but little confidence in the promises of such a man, though my husband believed them inviolable. Frequent parties were made at his Lordship’s house in Hill Street, and

many invitations pressed for a visit to his seat at Hagley. These I peremptorily refused, till the noble hypocrite became convinced of my aversion, and adopted a new mode of pursuing his machinations.

"One forenoon Lord Lyttelton called in Hatton Garden, as was almost his daily custom ; and on finding that Mr. Robinson was not at home, requested to speak with me on business of importance. I found him seemingly much distressed. He informed me that he had a secret to communicate of considerable moment both to my interest and happiness. I started : 'Nothing, I trust in heaven, has befallen my husband !' said I, in a voice scarcely articulate. Lord Lyttelton hesitated. 'How little does that husband deserve the solicitude of such a wife !' said he ; 'but,' continued his Lordship, 'I fear that I have in some degree aided in alienating his conjugal affections. I could not bear to see such youth, such merit, so sacrificed.' 'Speak briefly, my Lord,' said I. 'Then,' replied Lord Lyttelton, 'I must inform you that your husband is the most false and undeserving of that name !'

"'I do not believe it !' said I, indignantly. 'Then you shall be convinced,' answered his Lordship ; 'but remember, if you betray your true and zealous friend, I must fight your husband ;

for he never will forgive my having discovered his infidelity.'

" 'It cannot be true,' said I. 'You have been misinformed.'

" 'Hear me,' said he. 'You cannot be a stranger to my motives for thus cultivating the friendship of your husband. My fortune is at your disposal. Robinson is a ruined man; his debts are considerable, and nothing but destruction can await you. Leave him! Command my powers to serve you.'

"I would hear no more; my hours were all dedicated to sorrow, for I now heard that my husband, even at the period of his marriage, had an attachment which he had not broken, and that his infidelities were as public as the ruin of his finances was inevitable. I remonstrated—I was almost frantic. My distress was useless, my wishes to retrench our expenses were ineffectual. Lord Lyttelton now rested his only hope in the certainty of my husband's ruin. He therefore took every step and embraced every opportunity to involve him more deeply in calamity. Parties were made to Richmond and Salthill, to Ascot Heath and Epsom races, in all of which Mr. Robinson bore his share of expense, with the addition of post-horses. Whenever he seemed to shrink from his augmenting indiscretion, Lord

Lyttelton assured him that, through his interest, an appointment of honourable and pecuniary importance should be obtained ; though I embraced every opportunity to assure his Lordship that no consideration upon earth should ever make me the victim of his artifice.

"Mr. Fitzgerald still paid me unremitting attention. His manners *towards women* were beautifully interesting. He frequently cautioned me against the libertine Lyttelton, and as frequently lamented the misguided confidence which Mr. Robinson reposed in him.

"About this time a party was one evening made to Vauxhall. Mr. Fitzgerald was the person who proposed it, and it consisted of six or eight persons. The night was warm, and the gardens crowded ; we supped in the circle which has the statue of Handel in its centre. The hour growing late, or rather early in the morning, our company dispersed, and no one remained excepting Mr. Robinson, Mr. Fitzgerald, and myself. Suddenly a noise was heard near the orchestra ; a crowd had assembled, and two gentlemen were quarrelling furiously. Mr. R. and Fitzgerald ran out of the box. I rose to follow them, but they were lost in the throng, and I thought it most prudent to resume my place, which I had just quitted, as the only certain way of their finding me in safety. In a moment

Fitzgerald returned; 'Robinson,' said he, 'is gone to seek you at the entrance-door; he thought you had quitted the box.' 'I did for a moment,' said I, 'but I was fearful of losing him in the crowd, and therefore returned.'

"'Let me conduct you to the door; we shall certainly find him there,' replied Mr. Fitzgerald; 'I know that he will be uneasy.' I took his arm, and he ran hastily towards the entrance-door on the Vauxhall Road.

"Mr. Robinson was not there: we proceeded to look for our carriage; it stood at some distance. I was alarmed and bewildered. Mr. Fitzgerald hurried me along. 'Don't be uneasy; we shall certainly find him,' said he, 'for I left him here not five minutes ago.' As he spoke, he stopped abruptly, a servant opened a chaise-door; there were four horses harnessed to it, and by the light of the lamps on the side of the footpath I plainly perceived a pistol in the pocket of the door, which was open. I drew back. Mr. Fitzgerald placed his arm round my waist, and endeavoured to lift me up the step of the chaise, the servant watching at a little distance. I resisted, and inquired what he meant by such conduct. His hand trembled excessively, while he said in a low voice, 'Robinson can but fight me.' I was terrified beyond all description. I made him loose his hold, and ran

towards the entrance-door. Mr. Fitzgerald now perceived Mr. Robinson. 'Here he comes!' exclaimed he, with easy nonchalance. 'We had found the wrong carriage, Mr. Robinson; we have been looking after you, and Mrs. Robinson is alarmed beyond expression.'

"'I am, indeed,' said I. Mr. Robinson now took my hand, we stepped into the coach, and Mr. Fitzgerald followed. . . ."

This happened shortly before her eldest child, her "darling Maria," was born; and knowing George Robert Fitzgerald's propensity for duelling, she thought it better not to say anything to her husband about what had occurred. The excuse of having mistaken the carriage seemed so plausible that she let the matter rest. But she had had a warning, and from that time forward tried to avoid Fitzgerald as much as possible.

They seem to have been living in a state of reckless extravagance at this period. The truth was, Mr. Robinson became desperate. The large debts with which he was encumbered before his marriage laid the foundation of all his succeeding embarrassments, and he saw that no effort of economy or of professional labour could arrange his shattered finances. Now came scenes of trial and humiliation. Their property was seized, and they were reduced to the direst straits, during

which their noble friends studiously held aloof. Mrs. Robinson was sent to her husband's friends in the country, and there her child was born. But the quiet of a country life did not suit her, and she soon returned to London with her "sweet Maria," and a small volume of her own poems, which she intended publishing.* It is not stated that she ever carried out her intention of doing so. Indeed, it is very probable that she never did, and that the manuscript volume of her poems now in the British Museum is the one referred to. As it has neither date nor title-page, it is difficult to decide. Notwithstanding their recent difficulties, Mr. and Mrs. Robinson again soon plunged into all the dissipations of London. The Pantheon Rotunda was revisited, and again she became the object of the attentions of the persevering Fitzgerald and of the odious Lord Lyttelton. The latter had now been for some time past married to Mrs. Apphia Peach, and the hypocrisy of his character is very plainly shown in the way in which he pursued Mrs. Robinson with his dishonourable importunities, whilst at the same time he was writing letters full of beautiful moral sentiments to his father.

* In the MS. room of the British Museum Library there is a MS. volume of Mrs. Robinson's poems, in her own handwriting. As literary productions they are utterly devoid of merit. The caligraphy is excellent, almost like copper-plate.

Their affairs had now reached such a crisis that Mr. Robinson was once more arrested, and his wife took up her abode with him in the prison. There seemed to be no prospect of his being released, and, being reduced to the direst pecuniary distress, the idea of the stage again recurred to Mrs. Robinson. Through the instrumentality of some friends she was introduced to Sheridan, and gave a specimen of her dramatic powers. In the green-room of Drury Lane Theatre she repeated the principal scenes from "Romeo and Juliet," in the presence of Garrick, Sheridan, and Brereton, the latter reciting the part of *Romeo*. The former was much pleased with her, and fixed upon the character of *Juliet* as the one in which she was to make her *début*.

Garrick entertained very sanguine hopes of her success, and when the eventful night arrived sat in the orchestra to watch her. The fame of the new actress's beauty and talent attracted a crowded house, and the critics thronged the green-room. She was very nervous at first, and did not dare look at her audience during the whole of the first scene; but was greeted with shouts of applause, and as she gained more confidence the enthusiasm of her audience increased. Mrs. Robinson was emphatically a success, but less from her talent as an actress than from her fascinations

as a woman. "My dress," she says herself, "was a pale pink satin, trimmed with crape, richly spangled with silver ; my head was ornamented with white feathers, and my monumental suit for the last scene was white satin, and completely plain ; excepting that I wore a veil of the most transparent gauze, which fell quite to my feet from the back of my head, and a string of beads round my waist, to which was suspended a cross appropriately fashioned."

Sheridan was completely fascinated by the charming actress ; and she seems to have taken more than a mere friendly interest in him. "This distinguished being," as she repeatedly calls him in her Memoirs, was a frequent visitor at her house, and does not appear to have lost in her estimation by comparison with her husband. The latter was a gambler and a neglectful husband, and certainly left his beautiful wife too much to herself. Her popularity increased, and her pecuniary prospects began to brighten so far as to justify her taking a house in the vicinity of Drury Lane. Here her husband, who had managed to effect his release from the debtors' prison, joined her ; and again, with their customary recklessness, they plunged into all the dissipations of a fashionable life. They had horses, phaetons, and ponies. Mrs. Robinson set the fashion in dress ; her house was thronged

with visitors, and her morning levées were crowded by all the rank and fashion of the day. Mr. Fox and the Earl of Derby were amongst her most devoted admirers ; but the only one for whom—at that time—she seemed to have any especial fancy, was Sheridan. "He saw me," she casuistically records in one of her letters, "ill-bestowed upon a man who neither loved nor valued me ; he lamented my destiny, but with such delicate propriety, that it consoled, while it revealed to me the unhappiness of my situation."

For two years had Mrs. Robinson now been on the stage, performing in both tragedy and comedy. Her domestic life was very miserable, owing to the neglect of her husband and his unfortunate propensity for gambling. On several occasions their goods and chattels were seized for his debts, and only rescued through the liberality and intervention of sundry of his wife's admirers. Mrs. Robinson had two children at this time—her "darling Maria," and another daughter named Sophia, two years younger. All through her curious life these daughters remained faithful to her.

During the autumn of 1780, "The Winter's Tale" was performed at Drury Lane by command of their Majesties. It was the first time Mrs. Robinson had ever played before the Royal family,

and the first character in which she was destined to appear was that of *Perdita*. It was not, however, her first appearance in that part, as she had often before played it to the *Hermione* of Mrs. Hartley and Miss Farren. When she entered the green-room, dressed for the first act, she looked so exceptionally radiant in her grace and beauty, that the assembled company rallied her good-humouredly upon being bent upon making a conquest of the Prince of Wales. They little foresaw the variety of events that would arise from that night's exhibition!

Throughout the play the Prince regarded her with fixed attention, and whenever her position on the boards brought her within hearing of what was said in the royal box, he made some flattering remarks. So gratifying were they to her vanity, that she became so embarrassed that she could scarcely proceed with the play. Every one in the theatre observed the Prince's particular attention. At the conclusion of the play he bowed to her in a very marked manner; and she returned home to a supper party where the whole conversation centred in encomiums on the person, graces, and amiable manners of the Heir Apparent.

The most selfish and unprincipled of men, the Prince of Wales, aided and abetted by that most finished scoundrel, his friend Lord Malden, was

completely fascinated by the lovely actress, and deliberately set about trying to get her into his power. Weak-minded and inordinately vain, Mrs. Robinson was dazzled by the station, and beguiled by the protestations, of her royal lover. Without in any degree extenuating her follies, this much may be admitted—that she is entitled to some indulgence on the ground of the neglect of the husband who should have protected her, and the persevering arts that were used to ensnare her. How the first advances were made cannot be better told than in her own words.

“Lord Malden made me a morning visit ; Mr. Robinson was not at home, and I received him rather awkwardly. But his Lordship’s embarrassment far exceeded mine : he attempted to speak, paused, hesitated, apologised. I knew not why. He hoped I would pardon him ; that I would not mention something he had to communicate ; that I would consider the peculiar delicacy of his situation, and then act as I thought proper. I could not comprehend his meaning, and therefore requested that he would be explicit.

“ After some moments of evident rumination, he tremblingly drew a small letter from his pocket. I took it, and knew not what to say. It was addressed to PERDITA. I smiled, I believe, rather sarcastically, and opened the *billet*. It contained

a few words, but those expressive of more than common civility ; they were signed, FLORIZEL.

“ ‘ Well, my Lord, and what does this mean ? ’ said I, half angry.

“ ‘ Can you not guess the writer ? ’ said Lord Malden.

“ ‘ Perhaps yourself, my Lord ? ’ cried I, gravely.

“ ‘ Upon my honour, no,’ said the Viscount. ‘ I should not have dared so to address you on so short an acquaintance.’

“ I pressed him to tell me from whom the letter came. He again hesitated : he seemed confused and sorry that he had undertaken to deliver it. ‘ I hope I shall not forfeit your good opinion,’ said he, ‘ but——’

“ ‘ But what, my Lord ? ’

“ ‘ I could not refuse, for the letter is from the Prince of Wales.’

“ I was astonished : I confess that I was agitated ; but I was also somewhat sceptical as to the truth of Lord Malden’s assertion. I returned a formal and a doubtful answer ; and his Lordship shortly after took his leave.

“ A thousand times did I read this short but expressive letter, still I did not implicitly believe that it was written by the Prince : I rather considered it as an experiment made by Lord Malden either on my vanity or propriety of conduct. On

the next evening the Viscount repeated his visit : we had a card party of six or seven, and the Prince of Wales was again the subject of unbounded panegyric. Lord Malden spoke of his Royal Highness's manners, as the most polished and fascinating ; of his temper, as the most engaging ; and of his mind, the most replete with every amiable sentiment. I heard these praises, and my heart beat with conscious pride, while memory turned to the partial but delicately respectful letter which I had received on the preceding morning.

“The next day Lord Malden brought me a second letter. He assured me that the Prince was most unhappy lest I should be offended at his conduct ; and that he conjured me to go that night to the Oratorio, where he would by some signal convince me that he was the writer of the letters, supposing I was still sceptical as to their authenticity.

“I went to the Oratorio ; and, on taking my seat in the balcony box, the Prince almost instantaneously observed me. He held the printed bill before his face, and drew his hand across his forehead ; still fixing his eyes on me. I was confused, and knew not what to do. My husband was with me, and I was fearful of his observing what passed. Still the Prince continued to make signs, such as

moving his hand on the edge of the box as if writing, then speaking to the Duke of York (then Bishop of Osnaburg), who also looked towards me with particular attention.

“I now observed one of the gentlemen in waiting bring the Prince a glass of water ; before he raised it to his lips he looked at me. So marked was his Royal Highness’s conduct that many of the audience observed it ; several persons in the pit directed their gaze at the place where I sat ; and, on the following day, one of the diurnal prints observed that there was one passage in Dryden’s ode which seemed particularly interesting to the Prince of Wales, who—

Gazed on the fair
Who caused his care,
And sigh’d, and look’d, and sigh’d again.

“However flattering it might have been to female vanity to know that the most admired and most accomplished Prince in Europe was devotedly attached to me ; however dangerous to the heart such idolatry as his Royal Highness during many months professed in almost daily letters, which were conveyed to me by Lord Malden, still I declined any interview with his Royal Highness. I was not insensible to all his powers of attraction. I thought him one of the most amiable of men. There was a beautiful

ingenuousness in his language, a warm and enthusiastic adoration expressed in every letter, which interested and charmed me. During the whole spring, till the theatre closed, this correspondence continued ; every day giving me some new assurance of inviolable affection.

"After we had corresponded some months without ever speaking to each other (for I still declined meeting his Royal Highness, from a dread of the *éclat* which such a connexion would produce, and the fear of injuring him in the opinion of his royal relatives), I received through the hands of Lord Malden the Prince's portrait in miniature, painted by the late Mr. Meyer. This picture is now in my possession. Within the case was a small heart cut in paper, which I also have. On one side was written, '*Je ne change qu'en mourant.*' On the other, '*Unalterable to my Perdita through life.*'

"During many months of confidential correspondence, I always offered his Royal Highness the best advice in my power, and disclaimed every sordid and interested thought. At every interview with Lord Malden, I perceived that he regretted the task he had undertaken ; but he assured me that the Prince was almost frantic whenever he suggested a wish to decline interfering. Once I remember his Lordship's telling me that the late

Duke of Cumberland had made him a visit, early in the morning, at his house in Clarges Street, informing him that the Prince was most wretched on my account, and imploring him to continue his services only a short time longer. The Prince's establishment was then in agitation : at this period his Royal Highness still resided in Buckingham House.

“ A proposal was now made that I should meet his Royal Highness at his apartments, in the disguise of male attire. I was accustomed to perform in that dress, and the Prince had seen me (I believe) in the character of the ‘ Irish Widow.’ To this plan I decidedly objected. The indelicacy of such a step, as well as the danger of detection, made me shrink from the proposal. My refusal threw his Royal Highness into the most distressing agitation, as was expressed by the letter which I received on the following morning. Lord Malden again lamented that he had engaged himself in the intercourse, and declared that he had himself conceived so violent a passion for me that he was the most miserable and unfortunate of mortals.

“ During this period, though Mr. Robinson was a stranger to my epistolary intercourse with the Prince, his conduct was entirely neglectful. He was perfectly careless respecting my fame and my repose. His indifference naturally produced an

alienation of esteem on my side, and the increasing adoration of the most enchanting of mortals hourly reconciled my mind to the idea of a separation. The unbounded assurances of lasting affection which I received from his Royal Highness in many scores of the most eloquent letters, the contempt which I experienced from my husband, and the perpetual labour which I underwent for his support, at length began to weary my fortitude. Still I was reluctant to become the theme of public animadversion, and still I remonstrated with my husband on the unkindness of his conduct."

Contemporary records verify the truth, in the main, of these very candid confessions of Mrs. Robinson. She emphatically asserts that her husband knew nothing about her intercourse with the Prince. This seems strange, as the newspapers of the day freely ventilated the affair, and spoke openly of the loves of Florizel and Perdita. She obviously looked upon her pertinacious admirer as something more than mortal, and at length, yielding to his solicitations, consented to have an interview. Being of a sentimental and romantic nature, it was contrived to give a sort of melodramatic turn to the whole affair, and moonlight mufflings, and other incidents of secrecy, were pressed into the service.

The first interview took place by moonlight in

the avenue of old Kew Palace, in the presence of Lord Malden and the Duke of York. It lasted but for a moment, but was quite long enough to awaken in her mind the most enthusiastic admiration. "The rank of the Prince," she says, "no longer chilled into awe that being who now considered him as the lover and the friend. *The graces of his person, the irresistible sweetness of his smile, the tenderness of his melodious yet manly voice, will be remembered by me till every vision of this changing scene shall be forgotten.*"

Many and frequent were the interviews which afterwards took place at this romantic spot. The walks sometimes continued till past midnight, the Duke of York and Lord Malden always being of the party. The halo of romance and secrecy which surrounded these meetings contributed in no slight degree to enchain the weak-minded woman, who finally relinquished her profession in order that she might have the more time to bestow upon her royal lover, who was now upon the point of receiving his first establishment. Mrs. Robinson spent the intervening time in a state of visionary happiness, for she looked forward,—upon what grounds Heaven only knows!—to the settlement of the Prince's establishment as the precursor of the public acknowledgment of the affectionate relations between them. His Royal Highness lost no

opportunity of publicly avowing his partiality for Mrs. Robinson. At all places of public entertainment, at the King's hunt, at the reviews, and at the theatres, he distinguished her with the most marked attention. It was an unwise proceeding just at the time when he was receiving his first establishment, and the public prints were not slow to take cognisance of what was going on.

Upon the last night of her appearance upon the stage, she represented the character of *Sir Harry Revel*, in "The Miniature Picture," and also played in the farce of "The Irish Widow." She did not quit her profession without some regret, and was so overcome that she could scarcely perform with any decent show of equanimity. Grand things had been expected of her in her profession, and the play-loving public resented her relinquishing the stage, especially when it soon became well known why she did so. The newspapers freely indulged in the most scandalous paragraphs respecting the Prince of Wales and her. A pamphlet, which was speedily suppressed, and of which there is a copy at present in the British Museum, was now circulated, commenting in no very complimentary terms upon both. The unfortunate lady comes in for the largest share of contemptuous sarcasm, for at this period she had left home, husband, and children at the solicitations of the future

First Gentleman in Europe. Heedless of the consequences, she had given up everything for him. Her equivocal position rendering her an object of public notoriety, she was frequently obliged to quit Ranelagh, owing to the crowd which staring curiosity attracted to her box.

But the Prince soon began to tire of his toy. Mrs. Robinson was too much dazzled by the rank of her royal lover, and by his fascinating manners, to detect the hollowness and faithlessness of his nature. Moreover, she was in ignorance that his *affaires de cœur* were almost invariably conducted after the same fashion. His advances were always gradual and impassioned—his desertions, abrupt and unexpected. The time was now at hand when the deceived woman was to be rudely awakened from the dreams in which she had been indulging.

One day, shortly before the Prince took possession of his new establishment, Mrs. Robinson received a letter from him full of expressions of the most passionate attachment, and hinting that she would soon enjoy his public protection. Two days afterwards, what was her consternation to receive another missive from her lover—a cold and unkind letter, briefly informing her that they “*must meet no more!*”

Unable to account for this change in his con-

duct, Mrs. Robinson wrote at once to the Prince, demanding an explanation. She received no reply. Again she wrote, but without receiving any elucidation of the mystery. The Prince was at this time staying at Windsor, whither Mrs. Robinson drove in her pony phaeton, accompanied only by her boy-postillion. She performed the journey at the risk of her life, for she was attacked by a footpad on Hounslow Heath, and owed her safety to the fleetness of her ponies.

On her arrival, the Prince refused to see her; and Lord Malden and the Duke of Dorset assured her they could not account for this sudden change in his Royal Highness's sentiments. He persistently refused to see her, and she returned to town utterly bewildered and mortified.

Her "good-natured friends" now carefully informed her of the multitude of secret enemies who were ever employed in estranging the Prince's mind from her. So fascinating, so illustrious a lover, could not fail to excite the envy of her sex. Women of all descriptions were emulous of attracting his Royal Highness's attention. Alas! she had neither rank nor power to oppose such adversaries. Every engine of female malice was set in motion to destroy her repose, and every petty calumny was repeated with tenfold embellishments. Tales of the most infamous and glaring

falsehood were invented ; and she was again assailed by pamphlets, by paragraphs, by caricatures, and all the artillery of slander, while the only being to whom she then looked up for protection was so situated as to be unable to afford it. "In the anguish of my soul, I once more addressed the Prince of Wales. I complained, perhaps too vehemently, of his injustice, and of the calumnies which had been by my enemies fabricated against me, of the falsehood of which he was but too sensible. I conjured him to render me justice. He did so : he wrote me a most eloquent letter, disclaiming the causes alleged by a calumniating world, and fully acquitting me of the charges which had been propagated to destroy me,"

Her situation was at this period most distressing. She resided in an expensive house in Cork Street, Burlington Gardens, and was so deeply involved in debt that she literally did not know what to do. At first she thought of returning to the stage, but some friends whom she consulted advised her not to do so, as they feared the public would not tolerate her. She was obliged to give up the idea, although she was almost without the means of subsistence, and her debts amounted to seven thousand pounds. Lord Malden—who now became very assiduous in his attentions—was too poor to be able to render her any pecuniary assistance ;

her family refused to have anything to say to her ; therefore, when the Prince wrote saying he wished to renew their former friendship and affection, it can scarcely be wondered at that she consented to have an interview with him. The meeting took place at Lord Malden's house in Clarges Street. The Prince accosted her with every appearance of tender attachment—declaring that he had never for one moment ceased to love her, and that his coldness had been the effect of some stories repeated to him by her enemies. Some hours passed, and they parted on affectionate terms, Mrs. Robinson fondly flattering herself that all differences were adjusted. What was her surprise and chagrin when, on meeting the Prince the very next day in Hyde Park, he turned his head to avoid seeing her, and even affected not to know her !

Mrs. Robinson was overwhelmed by this additional cruelty. She did not then know the secret springs which were at work. The truth was, that the "establishment" of which she had dreamed, was only given to the Prince on condition that he gave up Mrs. Robinson. It was a cheap tribute to public decorum for him to do so, as he had ceased to care for her. With his customary meanness, he tried to get rid of her as cheaply as possible, and no answers were returned to her

numerous letters. The Prince had given her a bond for twenty thousand pounds, payable on his "establishment," and this was used as an instrument of negotiation. After much discreditable conduct upon both sides, the matter gained such publicity that it was felt that some settlement could not decently be refused. Mr. Fox undertook the office of arbitrator, and the bond was given up in consideration of an annuity of five hundred a year.

A prosaic ending to the loves of Florizel and Perdita! Unquestionably weak-minded and foolish, her conduct is to be severely censured; at the same time, it cannot be denied but that she was very harshly treated. Her story excited some sympathy, and in her altered circumstances she formed some reputable friendships. She now posed as a heroine, and poured forth her sorrows in feeble verses, which appeared in various newspapers. In the winter of 1790 it was announced that "Mrs. Robinson had entered into a poetical correspondence with Mr. Robert Merry, under the fictitious names of 'Laura' and 'Laura Maria;' Mr. Merry assuming the title of 'Della Crusca;'" and asserted that future poets and ages would join,

To pour in Laura's praise, their melodies divine.

One of these poems was called "*Ainsi va le*

Monde.” It contained three hundred and fifty lines, yet—it is stated—it was written in twelve hours. All her poetry is vapid and weakly sentimental.

“The fair Platonist,” as the newspapers of the day styled her, now formed an acquaintance with a Colonel Tarleton, in whose company she went abroad. During the journey she fell ill, and entirely lost the use of her limbs, and this at the age of twenty-four. She became an incurable cripple, and resigned herself to circumstances. Her time was chiefly passed in the composition of those vapid poems before alluded to. Pecuniary troubles also pressed heavily upon her. She found considerable difficulty in getting her annuity paid; and at length wrote to a “*noble debtor*,” to entreat a return of sums lent to him years before in her prosperity. The following copy of the letter was found amongst Mrs. Robinson’s papers after her decease :—

“April 23rd, 1800.

“MY LORD,—Pronounced by my physicians to be in a rapid decline, I trust that your Lordship will have the goodness to assist me with a part of the sum for which you are indebted to me. Without your aid I cannot make trial of the Bristol waters, the only remedy that presents to me any hope of preserving my existence. I should be

sorry to *die* at enmity with any person ; and you may be assured, my dear Lord, that I bear none towards you. It would be useless to ask you to call on me ; but, if you would do me that honour, I should be happy, *very happy*, to see you, being,

“ My dear Lord, yours truly,

“ MARY ROBINSON.”

This letter was never answered ! Every circumstance points to Lord Malden having been the one to whom it was addressed.

“ She was unquestionably very beautiful,” says Miss Hawkins, “ but more so in the face than in the figure ; and as she proceeded in her course she acquired a remarkable facility in adapting her deportment to her dress. When she was to be seen daily in St. James’s Street or Pall Mall, even in her chariot, the variation was striking. To-day she was a *paysanne*, with her straw hat tied at the back of her head, looking as if too new to what she passed to know what she looked at. Yesterday, perhaps, she had been the dressed belle of Hyde Park, trimmed, powdered, patched, painted to the utmost power of rouge and white lead ; to-morrow she would be the cravated Amazon of the riding-house ; but be she what she might, the hats of the fashionable promenaders swept the ground as she passed.

But in her outset, 'the style' was a high phaeton, in which she was driven by the favoured of the day. Three candidates and her husband were outriders, and this in the face of the congregations turning out of places of worship. About the year 1778 she appeared on the stage, and gained, from the character in which she charmed, the name of *Perdita*. She then started in one of the new streets of Marylebone, and was in her altitude. Afterwards, when a little in the wane, she resided under protection in Berkeley Square, and appeared to guests as mistress of the house as well as of its master. Her manners and conversation were said by those invited to want refinement. I saw her one day handed to her extravagant *vis-à-vis* by a man whom she pursued with a doting passion ; all was still externally brilliant ; she was fine and fashionable, and the men of the day in Bond Street still pirouetted as her carriage passed them. The next day the vehicle was reclaimed by the maker ; the Adonis whom she courted fled her : she followed, all to no purpose. She then took up a new life in London, became literary. What was the next glimpse ? On a table in one of the waiting-rooms of the Opera House was seated a woman of fashionable appearance, still beautiful, but not in the bloom of beauty's pride ; she was not noticed except by the

eye of pity. In a few minutes two liveried servants came to her, and they took from their pockets long white sleeves, which they drew on their arms; they then lifted her up and conveyed her to her carriage; it was the then helpless, paralytic *Perdita!*"*

In the autumn of 1800 Mrs. Robinson's health became very much worse. She suffered chiefly from an accumulation of water upon her chest. Her daughters were unceasing in their efforts to alleviate her sufferings; but all was of no avail. On the 21st of December she inquired how near was Christmas Day. Upon being told, she replied, "I shall never live to see it." During the whole of the next day her sufferings were excruciating, and towards the evening she sank into a kind of lethargic slumber. Her favourite daughter, Mary, approached the bedside, and earnestly conjured her mother to speak if it were in her power. "*My darling Mary!*" she ejaculated, faintly, and spoke no more. She then became unconscious, and breathed her last about the noon of the following day. She was in her forty-third year, twenty-seven of which she had been more or less before the public. Thus ended the career of the

* *Vide* P. Fitzgerald's "Romance of the Stage."

lovely PERDITA—the last of the famous pupils of the famous Garrick.

Mrs. Robinson died at Englefield Green, where for long after it was the *fashion* for Londoners to drive out and visit her *shrine*. She was buried in Old Windsor churchyard.





KITTY CLIVE.

BORN, A.D. 1711. DIED, A.D. 1785.

IN the year 1690—when the ill-fated James II. was obliged to fly to France—after the decisive battle of the Boyne—a young Irish gentleman from Kilkenny attached himself to the fortunes of the fallen king. He was a young lawyer named William Raftor, a descendant of an old and honourable Irish family, many members of which, during the disastrous period which preceded the Revolution and the accession of William III., had taken an active part in the political affairs of Ireland.

Upon the accession of the Prince of Orange the Raftor estates in the County of Kilkenny were confiscated to the Crown, thus leaving their rightful owner penniless. He entered the service of Louis XIV., where he showed such ability that he was soon promoted. After some time he obtained a pardon, and, returning to London, married a Mrs. Daniel, the daughter of a wealthy citizen living on Fish Street Hill. Such were the parents

of "that bundle of combustibles," bewitching Kitty Clive.

She was born in the year 1711, and her early youth was passed in the old city mansion on Fish Street Hill. Her father—a genial, dashing Irishman, capable of telling a good story, and able to give a good dinner—was a man of much cultivation, and affected the society of literary people. Amongst those who frequented his house was Theophilus Cibber—son of the laureate—who afterwards married Miss Johnson, the intimate friend of Kitty Raftor. He heard Kitty sing and recite one day, and was so struck with her talents that he immediately introduced her to his father. The cynical Colley Cibber was charmed with this bright-looking girl of sixteen, and immediately engaged her, at a salary of twenty shillings a week, to play subordinate parts at Drury Lane Theatre.

It does not appear that her family made any resistance to her going upon the stage, and adopting it as a profession. She had a brother who followed her example, but he never made any reputation as an actor, and is now only remembered as the steward who managed the business affairs of his more famous sister. Kitty Clive made her first appearance upon the stage at Drury Lane in the autumn of 1728. The play was

“Mithridates, King of Pontus,” and the young actress made her *début* in the character of *Ismenes*, page to *Ziphares*. Some songs were introduced solely upon her account, and were received with extraordinary applause. During this season she continually sang between the acts—as was then customary, a fashion which has been replaced by the orchestra of more modern times—or acted in subordinate parts, where songs were frequently interposed for the purpose of showing off her piquant style of singing. She speedily became a public favourite, but does not seem to have, all at once, obtained the marvellous popularity so suddenly achieved by many of the actresses of her time. Nevertheless, that her acting had made no little impression upon the public may be gathered from the fact, that when Colley Cibber’s pastoral drama of “Love in a Riddle” was acted at Drury Lane, it was Kitty Clive’s singing and sprightliness which carried it through. The audience, who had lately been wearied by several of the laureate’s vapid compositions, had caballed beforehand to damn the play. They openly expressed their disapproval of it, until the charming Kitty appeared, when some one in a stage-box, addressing the unruly pit, exclaimed in a voice of dismay—“Zounds! take care, or this charming little devil will spoil all!” She did spoil all their preconceived

schemes, for she turned the tide in favour of the drama.

In the year 1732, when she was just twenty-one, she married Mr. George Clive, the son of Baron Clive, a celebrated lawyer of the day. The marriage proved to be a very unsuitable one ; Mr. Clive was learned, grave, reserved, and objected to his wife continuing upon the stage. She refused to give up her profession, the result being much discontent, mutual recriminations, and finally—after this state of affairs had lasted for a couple of years—a separation was effected with mutual consent. Her husband here drops out of Mrs. Clive's life.

The public history of an actress's career must necessarily be, to some extent, a history of play-bills. For the next few years we find Mrs. Clive playing such parts as *Nell*, in "The Devil to Pay ;" *Narcissa*, in "Love's Last Shift ;" *Miss Hoyden*, in "The Relapse ;" and occasionally some subordinate Shakspearian parts. Horace Walpole says that she first made her reputation as an actress as *Nell*, in "The Devil to Pay." The latter was the most successful of Colley Cibber's ballad operas, and was written especially for Mrs. Clive. In one of his letters, Dr. Burney says that Kitty Clive's singing was intolerable when she meant to be fine, but that in ballad farces and songs of humour it

was, like her comic acting, everything it should be. Oliver Goldsmith, who was born the same year as Mrs. Clive, and who, at the time when the latter made her first success as *Nell*, was wandering with his flute all over Europe, said, when he saw her some years later: "Mrs. Clive! but what need I talk of her, since, without exaggeration, she has more true humour than any actor or actress upon the English or any other stage I have seen." And Oliver Goldsmith was no mean judge of humour. She was a "bundle of combustibles," clever, witty, wayward, sensible, and sarcastic. One of her contemporaries* says she was very vulgar, but yet "of genuine worth—indeed, INDEED! she was a diamond of the first water!"

During the season of 1741–42, Mrs. Clive played in the Aungier Street Theatre, in Dublin. It was here that the bitter rivalry, which lasted during their lives, commenced between Mrs. Clive and Mrs. Woffington. The latter and Garrick were delighting Dublin's play-loving population at the Smock Alley Theatre; whilst Mrs. Clive, Quin, and Ryan tried to bear off the palm at Aungier Street. On one night Mrs. Woffington was announced for her celebrated character of *Lady Townly*, and Mrs. Clive foolishly played the same

* Tate Wilkinson.

character upon the same night. It was an unwise thing to have done, for Mrs. Woffington was too well established a Dublin favourite for the playgoers not to give her the preference. Mrs. Clive's rendering of the part was a failure, but she made ample amends for it the next night by the way in which she played *Nell*, in "The Devil to Pay." During her engagement at Aungier Street, she played also in "The Virgin Unmasked," "The Country Wife," and as *Euphrosyne*, in "Comus," then acted in Dublin for the first time.

Beyond these theatrical details of her visit to Dublin, there is no further record of her life there. We know not whether she socially met Peg Woffington and Garrick. The latter was very much afraid of Kitty's sharp tongue; there was nothing in the world he dreaded so much as an altercation with her, and he always made it a drawn battle. He was very much in love with Peg Woffington at this time, so that it is more than probable he did not pay much attention to Kitty. The latter and Ryan returned to London at the close of the season, leaving Garrick and Woffington in Dublin.

In the autumn of 1743 we hear of her again at Drury Lane, where she essayed *Lady Townly*, notwithstanding her failure in Dublin. The absence of Mrs. Woffington, and possibly a less critical London audience, enabled her to get

through the piece with some show of success. Towards the close of the season she had a row with the manager, which resulted in her publishing her "Complaint." It was a very one-sided statement, but as she was a public favourite, and had the town on her side, she got the best of it.

She had now been for some years living at Little Strawberry Hill—or Clieveden, as it was sometimes called—at Twickenham, given to her by Horace Walpole for her use during her life; and what a brilliant assemblage did not the lively actress draw around her in those

Teacup times of hood and hoop,
And when the patch was worn!

All the wits and beaux and fine ladies of the day visited her. Horace Walpole and his nieces and Lady Waldegrave were her constant guests, and before "The Castle of Otranto" was sent to the printers, it was read aloud at one of Kitty Clive's supper parties.

Those supper parties! How lingeringly and quaintly Horace Walpole dwells upon them and descants upon them. "Am just come from supping at Mrs. Clive's," is no infrequent entry in his voluminous letters. How he and Kitty fought; how she won an apparent victory by means of blustering, and how he invariably gained the day by his diplomacy, are amongst the most amusing

incidents he records. "You never saw anything so droll," he writes, "as Mrs. Clive's countenance, between the heat of the weather, the pride in her legacy, and the effort to appear unconcerned."*

Fierce rivalry now raged between Mrs. Clive and Mrs. Woffington. They were at this time (1745, '46, '47, '48) both acting at Drury Lane, Garrick and Quin being the managers. Garrick is said to have hated her, although years afterwards, when she had left the stage, she accused him of "a sneaking fondness" for her. It is more than possible that although she often did battle against him, that there was no real animosity at the bottom of her sharp speeches. She was careless as to what she said; Garrick was sensitive to *everything* that was said concerning him. In later years she bore noble testimony to his disinterested desire to advance the theatrical profession, and bore ample testimony to his upright conduct.

The MS. playbills of Drury Lane show her as playing every season at that theatre from the year 1750 to 1769. It was the only London theatre at which she was ever regularly engaged, and for forty-one years, save one visit to Dublin, she continued to act there, and to be one of the chief

* She had been left a small legacy of 50*l*. *Vide* Walpole's Letters, vol. iii. p. 92.

attractions of Drury Lane. This is no slight argument in favour of her popularity. Kitty Clive has the honour of having played the chief character in the first French piece that ever was adapted for the English stage. It was called "*La Parisienne*," and the part played by Kitty was that of a smart-tongued waiting-maid. In a farce which she produced in 1750, for her own benefit, she scored an unqualified success. It was called "*The Rehearsal, or Bays in Petticoats*," and long continued to hold the stage.

"*The Winter's Tale*," with Garrick as *Leontes*, was produced several times during the season of 1755-56, Mrs. Clive playing the chief female part. Woodward—an excellent actor—was also in the cast. Between him and Mrs. Clive considerable animosity was well known to exist, a circumstance which gave life and interest to the piece. It was said that the actor threw her down with a violence more real than was warranted by the situation. The fierce and real resentment of the actress at this treatment, and her rage, which she could hardly control, all fell in excellently with the tone of the piece, and delighted the audience.

The following year witnessed the retirement of Mrs. Woffington, and Mrs. Clive had now the province of Comedy all to herself. Neither Miss Pope nor Miss Eliza Farren—both Irishwomen

also—had then won the laurels which they afterwards wore so grandly and gracefully. Garrick, too, had saved plenty of money, and now lived in comparative retirement at Hampton. Still “His Majesty’s servant,” yet he took the world much easier. He contented himself with playing well-known parts, seldom essaying a new character. At this period the Chelsea and Bow china manufactories were in a most flourishing condition, and Garrick, who had a nice taste in “curios,” filled his house with the china which was then the rage. These manufactories issued a series of pure white china statuettes, and many of these figures found their best originals upon the stage. Garrick as *Richard III.*, Woodward in “The Fine Gentleman,” and Kitty Clive as *The Lady* in “Lethe,” were favourite figures. Even now they fetch enormous prices at sales. At Mr. Henry G. Bohn’s famous sale of old English pottery and porcelain,* Kitty Clive and Woodward in Chelsea ware sold for the enormous sum of 43*l.*, whilst a white Bow figure of Kitty Clive alone fetched 31*l.*

Peg Woffington and Kitty Clive were sometimes sold together as companion figures. Two statuettes in Bristol ware, supposed to be their portraits, represent them as sphinxes. It is just possible

* Monday, March 15th, 1875, and three following days.

they may be portraits : but, on the other hand, it is just as likely that they are not, for it is scarcely probable that the strict Quaker china manufacturers of Bristol would take as their models two fascinating actresses.

For the next few years we find Mrs. Clive chiefly performing in stock dramas, with seldom a new play or a new character. In 1760 she produced a farce, called "Every Woman in her Humour," but it was not very successful. "A Sketch of a Fine Lady's Rout," produced in 1763, was more fortunate, for we find it frequently announced in the bills of Drury Lane. Concerning her public career there is little more to be gleaned. She acted every season until her retirement, spoke the epilogues—often written for her by Horace Walpole—frequently, and was the faithful servant of the public until her retirement in 1769.

She performed for the last time upon the night of April 24th, 1769, and took a benefit upon that occasion, when the plays selected were "The Wonder" and "Lethe." Mrs. Clive was then in her fifty-ninth year, and for forty-one years had been the delight of the play-loving population, and the chief exponent of female comedy characters at Drury Lane. "I am so sorry to lose you, Kitty," said Garrick, with feigned regret, upon the night of her retirement. "You lie, Davie! you lie!" she retorted; "and you

know you do ! You would light up for joy, only the candles would cost you sixpence." The latter in allusion to Garrick's well-known parsimony.

Kitty Clive was the best soubrette that ever trod the British stage. She had an inexhaustible fund of spirits, vivacity, and variety ; and was invaluable in any piece that had to be carried through with much bustle and quick repartee. She left the stage just in time ; whilst she was still "drawing," and still delighting the public. Over her audiences she reigned supremely ; they smiled with her, sneered with her, giggled with her, and laughed aloud with her. She was the true Comic Genius,—and they recognised it.

In 1760 or 1761, Charles Churchill published his famous "*Rosciad*." In it the professional characters of Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres were examined with an acuteness of criticism, an easy flow of humour and sarcasm, which rendered what he probably considered as a temporary trifle a publication of uncommon popularity, and a valuable contribution to the history of the stage. He had, however, so little encouragement in bringing this poem forward that five guineas were refused as the price he valued it at. Accordingly, he printed it at his own risk, when he had scarcely money enough to pay for the necessary advertisements. The "*Rosciad*" was an enor-

mous success, and in it he thus alludes to Kitty Clive :—

Just to their worth, we female rights admit,
Nor bar their claim to empire or to wit;
First, giggling, plotting chambermaids arrive,
Hoydens and romps, led on by Gen'ral Clive.
In spite of outward blemishes she shone,
For humour famed, and humour all her own.
Easy, as if at home, the stage she trod,
Nor sought the critic's praise, nor feared his rod.
Original in spirit and in ease,
She pleased, by hiding all attempts to please. .
No comic actress ever yet could raise
On Humour's base, more credit or more praise.

Kitty Clive was an inveterate gambler, and her card-parties—where, to use Walpole's phrase, she "made miraculous draughts of fishes"—at Little Strawberry Hill were famous. With "Bonny Dame Cadwallader," as she was familiarly called, lived her brother, William Raftor, who had failed as an actor, chiefly from his ugliness and awkward demeanour. He was a man of much information, possessing an enormous fund of original humour. In the talent of telling a humorous love-story he was unequalled, and seems to have been a general favourite with the brilliant circle surrounding his no less brilliant sister.

A youth of folly, and an age of cards,

wrote Pope, referring to Kitty Clive's ruling passion. "Mrs. Clive," writes Horace Walpole, "I flatter myself, is really recovered, having had no

relapse since I mentioned her last. She even partakes of the diversions of the carnival which at Twickenham commences at Michaelmas, and lasts as long as there are four persons to make a pool. I have preached against hot rooms, but the Devil, who can conceal himself in a black ace as well as in an apple or a guinea, has been too mighty for me, and so, like other divines, when I cannot root out vice, I join in it."*

What a pleasant life she must have led at Cliveden—as Walpole humorously called it—whence he cut a green lane across the meadows to his own house, and called it *Drury-Lane*. “Trim Horace and Portly Clive,” with their brilliant company, philandering and gossiping through the pleasant Twickenham meadows, or over a cup of tea, was no unusual sight. She was almost as fond of tea as she was of cards, and when she lived in lodgings in Jermyn Street—in her professional days—Sir Joshua Reynolds not infrequently took a “dish o’ tay” with the jovial, ugly, witty, sensible actress. Kitty had few cares at this time; her private character was irreproachable; her chief trials were when the taxgatherer ran off, and she was made to pay her rates twice; or when, as she said, the parish refused to mend her ways; or when she

* *Vide* Horace Walpole’s Letters, vol. viii. pp. 186, 187.

was robbed in her own lane by footpads. "Have you not heard," she wrote to Garrick in 1776, "of your poor Pivy? I have been robbed and murdered, coming from Kingston. Jimney" (her brother) "and I in a post-chey, at half-past nine, just by Teddington Church was stopt. I only lost a little silver and my senses; for one of them came into the carriage with a great horse pistol, to search for my watch, but I had it not with me." Considering Kitty's customary orthography, this letter is a marvel of good spelling.

But although Mrs. Clive had abandoned the stage, she did not cease to take a warm interest in her former profession. Her countrywoman, Miss Pope—then steadily rising in the favour of the public—spent much of her time at Little Strawberry Hill, where Mrs. Clive assisted her with much good advice. She and Garrick became very good friends after she left the stage. He took to praising her in the green-room; but when Kitty was told of this, she only laughed, and shrewdly said that he only did it for the sake of annoying Mrs. Abingdon, whom he disliked. Mrs. Clive very often visited the theatre after her retirement; and, the year before her death, went to see Mrs. Siddons as *Lady Macbeth*. Upon being asked her opinion of the great actress, she replied that "it was all truth and daylight." She was too generous-

minded ever to withhold praise where praise was due. Certainly, it was often given grudgingly and spitefully, but it was accorded nevertheless. *Apropos* of this, an amusing story is told concerning Garrick and her. At the time of the occurrence she had never seen him perform in tragedy, and during one of their squabbles said she did not think he could do so. Determined to convince her, he assumed *Hamlet* in a few days. Kitty stood at the wings; the genuine enthusiasm for her art caused her to forget her private pique, and she applauded vigorously. "Well, Kitty," said Garrick complacently, as he came off after the last scene, "have I convinced you that I can act in tragedy?" The actress was immediately forgotten in the woman: bursting into tears of vexation, she exclaimed with her customary want of coherence of ideas,—“Tragedy! Why, d——n you, Davie! you could act a gridiron!”

Mrs. Clive was now (in 1785) an old woman. She was in her seventy-fifth year, and constantly ailing; but her exhaustless energy hindered her from giving way. She had a severe attack of some chest complaint in the spring of 1782, from which she does not seem ever to have quite recovered. Over and over again Horace Walpole expresses his concern about her health. More fortunate in her old age than most women of her

profession at that time, she had a free house, plenty of money, and plenty of friends. They smoothed the way for her, but they could not avert the last scene of all.

“My poor old friend (Mrs. Clive) is a great loss; but it did not much surprise me, and the manner comforts me. I had played at cards with her at Mrs. Gostling’s three nights before I came to town, and fancied her extremely confused, and not knowing what she did: indeed, I perceived something of the sort before, and had found her much broken this autumn. It seems that the day after I saw her, she went to General Lister’s burial, and caught cold, and had been ill for two or three days. On the Wednesday morning she rose to have her bed made; and while sitting on the bed with her maid by her, sank down at once, and died without a pang or a groan. Poor Mr. Raftor is struck to the greatest degree, and for some days refused to see anybody. She is to be buried to-night.”*

The Gentleman’s Magazine for December 6th, 1785, has the following notice:—

“At Twickenham, aged 72, Mrs. Catherine Clive. She was the daughter of Mr. William Raftor, who was bred to the law.”

* Letter from Horace Walpole to Lady Browne. Date, December 14th, 1785.

She was buried in a vault beneath Twickenham church.

Kitty Clive was not beautiful. Horace Walpole constantly says she was “bonny” and “bewitching.” From what can be gathered from the various scattered contemporary notices, it may safely be asserted that her attractiveness lay in a certain charm of manner, combined with her un-failing humour and high spirits. She was noble-natured and generous-minded, and quite worthy of the appellation bestowed upon her by Percy Fitzgerald, who calls her “a pearl of the stage !”





DOROTHY JORDAN.

BORN, A.D. 1762. DIED, A.D. 1816.

YET another victim to Royal caprice and selfishness! The child of an Irishman and of the daughter of a Welsh clergyman, Dorothy Bland was born in Waterford about the year 1762—that southern Irish city which has given to the stage three of its best actresses—namely, Kitty Clive, Maria Pope, and the subject of this sketch. Under the name of Miss Francis she made her *début* on the Dublin stage in 1777, as *Phæbe*, in “As You Like It.” Her success seems to have been rather moderate, in consequence of which, and also because of a row which she had with Daly, the manager, she went to Cork, where she was warmly received, and afforded a free benefit, by which she cleared the munificent sum of 40*l.*!

Nothing succeeds like success; and in consequence of the favourable reception afforded to her by the good people of Cork, who were charmed with her archness of manner and her sportive sim-

plicity, Daly made the young actress an offer of three guineas a week, if she would only return to Smock Alley. She accepted this engagement, but soon left Dublin again. Daly acted rudely towards her, which she resented, and in 1782 she went to England, where she was engaged by Tate Wilkinson to appear at the Leeds Theatre, as *Calista*, in "The Fair Penitent." Upon being introduced to Tate Wilkinson, he asked her what was her "line"—whether "tragedy, comedy, or opera;" to which she at once replied with alacrity, "Them all!" Moreover, she undertook to give him a specimen of her operatic powers as soon as the tragedy was over, by going on and singing "The Greenwood Laddie." Wilkinson was almost afraid to risk the innovation; however, the wild Irish girl persisted, and had her way. "But on she jumped," says Boaden, "with her elastic spring, and a smile that Nature's own cunning hand had moulded, in a frock and a little mob-cap, and her curls as she wore them all her life; and she sang her ballad so enchantingly as to fascinate her hearers, and convince the manager that every charm had not been exhausted by past times, nor all of them numbered; for the volunteer, unaccompanied ballad of Mrs. Jordan was peculiar to her, and charmed only by her voice and manner."

It was whilst at York* she assumed—by the advice of some of her friends there—the name of “Mrs. Jordan.” Tate Wilkinson suggested the cognomen; “for,” said he, “you have just crossed over the waters of Jordan—the Irish Channel.” With this manager she also went to Leeds, back again to York, but during this provincial tour does not appear to have scored any particular success. Still in Tate Wilkinson’s company, she came to London in 1785, and procured an engagement at Drury Lane, where was then congregated one of the most brilliant theatrical companies the world has ever seen.

Dorothy Jordan made her first curtsey to a London audience on the 18th of October, 1785, in the character of *Peggy*, in “*The Country Girl*.” “She came to town,” says Mrs. Inchbald, in her generous criticism, “with no report in her favour to elevate her above a very moderate salary, or to attract more than a very moderate house when she appeared. But here moderation stopped. She at once displayed such consummate art, with such bewitching nature, such excellent sense, and such

* Mr. Cornelius Swan, the great York critic of the day, used to say that he had “discovered” Mrs. Jordan. Tate Wilkinson gives an amusing picture of him sitting by the actress’s bedside with a bad cold, and Mrs. Jordan’s red cloak wrapped around him whilst he gave her lessons in theatrical matters.

innocent simplicity, that her auditors were boundless in their plaudits, and so warm in their praises when they left the theatre that their friends at home would not give credit to the extent of their eulogiums."

Viola, in "Twelfth Night," was her next character, then *Imogen*; but neither pleased the audience as well as did *Peggy*. Mrs. Jordan had the rare good sense to keep to parts which suited her, so that for the future she wisely confined herself to the study of comedy alone. Her *forte* was comedy—laughing, exuberant comedy—and in such parts no actress ever excelled her. "In male attire," says one of her critics, "no actress can be named in competition with her but Mrs. Woffington, and she was as superior to Mrs. Woffington in voice as Woffington was to her in beauty. She sang so sweetly—with such distinct articulation, and such enchanting melody—that her introduced airs, always appropriate to the occasion, were often called for three times."

Mrs. Abingdon was one of the queens of Drury Lane at the time. She was not a favourite with her sister actresses, who secretly despised her; Kitty Clive especially signalling her as a mark for her pungent sarcasm. Mrs. Abingdon affected the society of ladies of quality, and was never so happy as when a duchess permitted her to call her

by her Christian name. What gall and wormwood it must have been to her to see the throne of comedy, which she had held so long, usurped by Dorothy Jordan, who was merely a raw young Irish actress-of-all-work from the York circuit—a girl who dressed carelessly, moved and sang as the whim prompted her, thought nothing of stage traditions, and, in short, was as completely the incarnation of natural charm as Mrs. Abingdon was of artificial.

All her life Mrs. Jordan was living, as it is euphemistically called, “under protection.” Her protector, soon after she came to London, was a Mr. Ford, who was the father of three of her children. It is said that but for the interference of his family this gentleman would have married her; but upon this head we have no very authentic particulars. Mrs. Jordan’s position as a comedy actress being now fully established, she accepted a provincial engagement, visiting Glasgow, Edinburgh, York, Leeds, and Chester. In all the places where she had formerly acted, the enthusiastic reception she now met with fully compensated for any coldness her country audiences may have hitherto shown. When at Chester, Mrs. Jordan, hearing that a poor widow, with three young children, was imprisoned for a small debt, with expenses, amounting to 8*l.*, paid the amount, and

procured the debtor's release. The same evening, whilst taking shelter from the rain, under a porch in the street, she was surprised by the appearance of the woman with her children, kneeling before her, to thank her for her kindness. The scene strongly affected her; and not less so a Methodist preacher, who had taken shelter under the same porch, who stretched forth his hand to Mrs. Jordan, saying:—

“Would to the Lord the world were all like thee!”

“No,” she said, retreating a little, “I won't shake hands with you.”

“Why?” was the amazed query.

“Because you are a Methodist preacher,” she replied; “and when you know who I am you will send me to the devil.”

“The Lord forbid!” he exclaimed. “I am, as you say, a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who tells us to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and relieve the distressed; and do you think I can behold a sister fulfil the commands of my great Master, without feeling that spiritual attachment which leads me to break through worldly customs, and offer you the hand of fellowship and brotherly love?”

“Well!” she exclaimed impulsively, “you are a good old soul, I daresay; but I don't like fanatics,

and you'll not like me when I tell you what I am."

"I hope I shall," was the reply.

"Well, then, I am a player."

The preacher sighed.

"Yes," she continued, "I am a player, and you must have heard of me. My name is Mrs. Jordan."

After a short pause, the preacher, extending his hand, said:—

"The Lord bless thee, whoever thou art! His goodness is unlimited. He has bestowed upon thee a large portion of His Spirit; and, as to thy calling, if thy soul upbraid thee not, the Lord forbid that I should."

Mrs. Jordan accepted the good man's hand, and walked some little distance with him, when he parted from her, saying:—

"Fare thee well, sister. I know not what the principles of people of thy calling may be; thou art the first of them I ever conversed with; but if their benevolent practices be equal to thine, I hope and trust at the great day that the Almighty will say to each, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee!'"

For the next few years we find Mrs. Jordan acting at Drury Lane constantly, where she had for her associates, Mrs. Siddons and Miss Elizabeth Farren. Mrs. Jordan and Miss Farren, although both mistresses of comedy,

never became rivals. Miss Farren's comedy was of the essentially aristocratic type; Mrs. Jordan's, outrageously bustling and exuberant. There were some captious critics who infinitely preferred Mrs. Jordan's *Lady Teazle* to that of Miss Farren. The latter was exclusively the fine lady, whilst Mrs. Jordan gave those little touches of rusticity, considered by some as necessary to mark the country education of the lively heroine. Her professional career chronicles a long list of provincial and metropolitan successes, and during the twenty-eight years that she was before the public, she was universally admitted to be the most brilliant comic genius of her day.

Sir Joshua Reynolds went to one of her benefits—about the time when Mrs. Siddons went to tea with Dr. Johnson in Bolt Court, and found he had not a chair for her to sit on—when she played *Hypolita*, in “She Would and She Would Not,” and *Mrs. Brady*, in “The Irish Widow;” but he did not paint her portrait, although we find from his visiting-book that she used to come to his studio. Romney painted a fascinating half-length of her as “The Country Girl,” a portrait which is one of the happiest efforts of his genius. The expression is bewitching, quite as much so as that of any of his Lady Hamiltons. But it would not have been Dorothy Jordan's likeness had it been other than

bewitching; for there was an irresistible joyousness about her, quite independent of any regular beauty of feature.

And now we raise the curtain upon her private life. In the year 1790 she made the acquaintance of the Duke of Clarence ; an association which at first somewhat injured her popularity. She was at this time playing at Covent Garden, with a salary of 30*l.* a week ; which the manager was beginning to grumble about paying, as the public prints had begun to deliver strictures upon her conduct, and also charged her with remissness in the discharge of her professional duties. The public is very quick to resent any discourtesy upon the part of Her Majesty's servants, as Mrs. Jordan soon discovered to her cost. On one occasion the audience received her with manifest marks of displeasure. The brilliant actress, however, was not daunted, and advancing to the footlights, she thus addressed them :—

“ Ladies and gentlemen,—I should conceive myself utterly unworthy of your favour, if the slightest mark of public disapprobation did not affect me sensibly. Since I have had the honour and the happiness to strive here to please you, it has been my constant endeavour, by unremitting assiduity, to merit your approbation. I beg to assure you,

upon my honour, that I have never absented myself one minute from the duties of my profession but from real indisposition ; thus having invariably acted, I do consider myself under the public protection."

It was just at this time she consented to put herself under the protection of the Duke of Clarence, he allowing her 1000*l.* a year. The King thought it too much, and suggested 500*l.* Mrs. Jordan's only answer to the proposition was a pertinent reply, quite characteristic of the lively actress.

In the previous March of that year Mrs. Jordan played *Cælia*, in the "Greek Slave," for her benefit. *Carlia* is the mistress to a king's son, and this, coupled with a prophetic allusion in the modern epilogue to a future condition in her life, which was not then in the remotest degree contemplated, is noted by Mr. Boaden, in his Memoirs, as a coincidence.

Mrs. Jordan was faithful to her Royal lover, and an excellent mother to his ten children. Their domestic harmony was proverbial, and continued uninterrupted for the twenty-one years that they lived together. The true reason of their separation has never transpired ; but the fatal faithlessness of the Georges is too notorious to leave any doubt but that it proceeded from caprice or State reasons.

The separation took place in 1811, and the unexpected manner in which the news reached Mrs. Jordan suggests a parallel between her case and that of the ill-fated "Perdita." She was acting at Cheltenham one night, when she received a letter informing her that her connexion with the Duke of Clarence must cease, and desiring her to meet him at Maidenhead the next day. With much difficulty she struggled through her part that evening, and the next day had an interview with the Duke. What passed is not known, save that the unhappy woman, who was sincerely attached to the Royal scoundrel, was told that she was henceforth to be unto him as a stranger. To a confidential friend she addressed the following letter upon the subject :—

"MY DEAR SIR,—I received yours, and its inclosure, safe this morning. My mind is beginning to feel somewhat reconciled to the shock and surprise it has lately received ; for could you or the world believe that we never had, for twenty years, the semblance of a quarrel ? But this is so well known in our domestic circle, that the astonishment is the greater ! Money, money, my good friend, or the want of it, has, I am convinced, made him at this moment the most wretched of men ; but having done wrong, he does not like to

retract. But with all his excellent qualities, his domestic virtues, and his love for his lovely children, what must he not at this moment suffer ! His distresses should have been relieved before ; but this is *entre nous*.

“ All his letters are full of the most unqualified praise of my conduct ; and it is the most heartfelt blessing to know that, to the best of my power, I have endeavoured to deserve it. I have received the greatest kindness and attention from the R——t, and every branch of the Royal family, who, in the most unreserved terms, deplore this melancholy business. The whole correspondence is before the R——t ; and, I am proud to add, that my past and present conduct has secured me a friend, who declares he never will forsake me, ‘ My forbearance,’ he says, ‘ is beyond what he could have imagined.’ But what will not a woman, do, who is firmly and sincerely attached ? Had he left me to starve I never would have uttered a word to his disadvantage. I inclose you two other letters ; and in a day or two you shall see more, the rest being in the hands of the R——t. And now, my dear friend, do not hear the D. of C. unfairly abused. He has done wrong, and he is suffering for it. But as far as he has left it in his own power, he is doing everything kind and noble, even to the distressing himself. I thank you

sincerely for the friendly caution at the end of your letter, though I trust there will be no occasion for it ; but it was kind and friendly, and as such I shall ever esteem it.

“ I remain, dear Sir,

“ Yours sincerely,

“ DORA JORDAN.”

From a pecuniary point of view, Mrs. Jordan's future was well provided for. She was to receive, for the maintenance of the Duke's four daughters, and a house and carriage for their use, 2100*l.*; for her own use, 1500*l.* per annum ; and, to enable her to make provision for her married daughters, the children of her former connexion with Mr. Ford, 800*l.* per annum, making altogether 4400*l.* It was also stipulated that in the event of Mrs. Jordan's returning to her former profession, the Duke's four daughters were to be removed from her guardianship, and their allowance to revert to their father. This arrangement was put in force a few months later, when Mrs. Jordan returned to the stage. The mental suffering she endured rendered it indispensable that she should keep her brain well occupied. But grief had so altered the once brilliant actress, that she met with but little success in the arena of her former triumphs. Of her, Hazlitt says :—

“Mrs. Jordan’s excellences were all natural to her. It was not as an actress, but as herself, that she charmed every one. Nature had formed her in her most prodigal humour; and when Nature is in the humour to make a woman all that is delightful, she does it most effectually. Her face, her tones, her manner were irresistible. Her smile had the effect of sunshine, and her laugh did one good to hear it. Her voice was eloquence itself; it seemed as if her heart were always at her mouth. She was all gaiety, openness, and good-nature. She rioted in her fine animal spirits, and gave more pleasure than any other actress, because she had the greatest spirit of enjoyment in herself.”

When the Duke of Clarence became William IV. he raised his eldest son by Mrs. Jordan to the dignity of Earl of Munster, his other children having due precedence.

The scene changes. In a gloomy, miserable apartment, in a lodging-house at St. Cloud, a woman lies dying. Everything bespeaks, if not utter destitution, at least very straitened circumstances upon the part of the occupants of the chamber. With the close of the June evening the bright, loving spirit of Dorothy Jordan takes its flight to Him who proudly numbered the Magdalen amongst His friends.

During her residence in St. Cloud, Mrs. Jordan had passed under the name of Mrs. Johnson, or, as some say, Mrs. James. There is a dispute as to the exact date of her death, some affirming that it took place on July the 3rd, 1816, instead of in June. There were also those who asserted that they had seen her in London later than her alleged death in June, and concerning this Boaden, the actor, tells the following story :—

“I was taking,” he says, “a very usual walk before dinner, and I stopped at a bookseller’s window on the left side of Piccadilly, to look at an embellishment to some new publication that struck my eye. On a sudden a lady stood by my side, who had stopped with a similar impulse ; to my conviction it was Mrs. Jordan. As she did not speak, but dropped a long white veil immediately over her face, I concluded that she did not wish to be recognised, and therefore, however I should have wished an explanation of what so surprised me, I yielded to her pleasure upon the occasion, grounded, I had no doubt, upon sufficient reason. When I returned to my own house at dinner time, I mentioned the circumstance at table, and the way in which it struck me is yet remembered in the family. I used on the occasion the strong language of Macbeth, ‘If I stand here, I saw her.’ It was but very recently I heard for the first time

that one of her daughters, Mrs. Alsop, had, to her entire conviction, met her mother in the Strand after the report of her death ; that the reality or the fancy threw her into fits at the time, and that to her own death she believed that she had not been deceived."

Of Mrs. Jordan's amiable and generous disposition as a woman there can be but one opinion, and that a favourable one. Of her abilities as an actress all her contemporaries speak in terms of delight and admiration, and the neglectful and heartless way in which she was left to die, in comparative poverty and loneliness, is but an additional commentary upon the text, "Put not your trust in princes."





ELIZABETH FARREN.

(COUNTESS OF DERBY.)

BORN A.D. 1759. DIED A.D. 1829.



AMONGST the great names which have imparted lustre and dignity to the comic drama, that of Farren stands unrivalled. Nineteen years ago died the aged William Farren, who for upwards of half a century delighted the comedy-loving playgoers of his time. His father was also an actor, and the original *Careless*, in Sheridan's "School for Scandal." The manner and delivery of both these comedians are now quoted as precedents. The easy, natural, and well-bred style in which they acted the parts of fine gentlemen has often been commented upon. *Sir Peter Teazle* found an admirable exponent in William Farren the elder, a part which at present finds its best interpreter in the William Farren of our own day. His performance of this character during the successful revival of "The School for Scandal" at the Vaudeville Theatre, in 1873, will long be remembered as an intellectual

treat and a highly-finished piece of artistic comedy. Between this family of Farrens and the subject of the present memoir it is not easy to trace a relationship, if any. But in considering the history of the British stage—so rich in genealogies—histrionic talent, and that in an especial line too, is so often found to be hereditary, that it is difficult to come to the conclusion that some of the greatest male and female comedians, as they have the same name, do not spring from the same common stock.

No more distinguished daughter of Thalia ever trod the boards of a theatre than Elizabeth Farren. Nature combined with Art to shower upon her every good gift which could tend to insure and to enhance her success. She was one of the best representatives of the fine lady that has ever appeared upon the stage. In appearance she was tall, and her bearing aristocratic; rather thin, but with a form every gesture of which was eloquent of grace and dignity. Her face was expressive, her features regular, and her voice, although very powerful, was mellow and feminine. She had received a good education, her pronunciation having been carefully attended to. Her words were always perfectly articulate, and her manner of speaking was quite free from all approach to affectation, provincialism, or vulgarity. Tate Wil-

kinson, than whom there was no one more capable of giving an opinion, speaks enthusiastically about Miss Farren.

“Having so often mentioned Mrs. Woffington,” he says, “I naturally apprehend that many persons who have not had the pleasure of seeing her would like a short description of that celebrated actress; and having related so many particulars of that lady, and pronounced authoritatively how much I was thought a strong caricature of her stage manner, it might be judged that I could give some ideas as to a similitude, which indeed I can, with the strongest traits, and at the same time compliment the present age on their possessing an actress in a first polished character in the arch and attractive Miss Farren. Such parts as *Lady Townly*, *Maria*, *Millamant*, &c., now represented by her, were formerly thought Mrs. Woffington’s best line of acting. Miss Farren is to a certainty very like Mrs. Woffington in some points, and enchantingly superior in others. Miss Farren, as to every intrinsic quality, may bid the world look on, scrutinise, and envy; while on the opposite side we are compelled to place comparatively Mrs. Woffington (who also had her share of praiseworthy qualities), yet a veil will be sometimes necessary to shade the frailties too often prevalent over the human disposition.

“A fashion having very much obtained of late years of giving what are called scales of merit of different theatrical performers, I have been induced to form a scale, in which I have weighed the respective merits of Mrs. Woffington and Miss Farren, and which I trust will be looked on by candid judges as a fair and impartial statement of the personal qualifications of the two ornaments of the theatre, whom it places in a comparative point of view.

SCALE OF MERIT.

“Their complexion and features much alike. Miss Farren will be more like ten years hence, before which time I hope she will be distinguished by some other appellation.

MRS. WOFFINGTON.	MISS FARREN.
Mrs. Woffington was tall	So is Miss Farren.
Mrs. Woffington was beautiful . .	So is Miss Farren.
Mrs. Woffington was elegant . .	So is Miss Farren.
Mrs. Woffington was well-bred . .	So is Miss Farren.
Mrs. Woffington had wit	So has Miss Farren.
Mrs. Woffington had a harsh, broken, and discordant voice . . }	Miss Farren's musical and bewitching.
Mrs. Woffington <i>could</i> be rude and vulgar. }	
	Miss Farren, <i>never</i> .

“So undoubtedly Miss Farren seizes the wreath of Fame with security, as she adds to her perfections in the scale of merit, virtue, modesty, reverence to a parent, and every other endearing quality; therefore, with propriety and for the

credit of the drama, let me hurl my cap and cry—

Long live THE FARREN!

So my dear, agreeable Miss Farren, for the present adieu.”*

In the annals of the stage there is scarcely a more romantic history than that of “Lizzy Farren.” Her father was a surgeon in Cork, and her mother the daughter of a brewer in Liverpool. Of idle and dissolute habits, Mr. Farren, through his imprudence and love of drink, plunged his family into debt and difficulties. They were reduced to dire straits, and at the solicitation of his wife they all left Cork, and went to live in Liverpool, in the hope that Mrs. Farren’s relatives might afford them some aid. The improvident Irishman and his family do not seem to have met with a very warm reception from their English relations, and, at this juncture, having become acquainted with some persons connected with the theatre in Liverpool, Mrs. Farren decided upon trying her fortune as an actress. She obtained several provincial and London engagements, but her talents do not seem ever to have soared beyond mediocrity ; nevertheless, she was so far successful that she determined to bring up her three daughters to the same profession.

* Tate Wilkinson’s “Memoirs,” vol. i. pp. 105-7.

Indeed, the whole Farren family seem to have become stage-struck about this time. Mr. Farren, although so idle and dissipated, was possessed of a fair share of histrionic ability ; and *he* too essayed to try his fortune on the boards. In the winter of 1769 he got together a strolling company, and taking with him his little daughter "Lizzy," set out for a tour through some of the provincial towns.

On Christmas-Eve, 1769, they reached the town of Salisbury. "They had a shabby-genteel air about them ; looked hungry and happy ; and one or two wore one hand in the pocket, upon an economising principle in reference to gloves." They entered the town with as much state as they could assume, preceded by the drummer, who, with his noisy instrument, loudly announced the advent of the troupe. The procession was closed by a fine, gentleman-like man, holding by the hand a pretty, graceful little girl. He was the ex-surgeon of Cork, and the little girl was his pet daughter, Lizzy Farren, the future Countess of Derby.

The Mayor of Salisbury chanced, upon this particular day, not to have been in an especially amiable frame of mind. Moreover, he had a very vivid sense of the dignity which hedged round his civic office ; and hurled his magisterial wrath at the manager for daring to bring his strolling

players into the town without first requesting permission to do so. The manager protested that he was then, in company with his players, on his way to request the Mayor's license to act in Salisbury. But it was all in vain ; the wrath of the great man had been roused ; the vagabond actors had entered the borough without permission, and the unlucky manager was condemned to pass his Christmas in durance vile, in the lock-up.

The Mayor had been playing at single-stick with a couple of strangers when the noise of the drum had aroused him, and disturbed the game. They looked on gravely, and listened to the altercation between the irascible Mayor and the manager, but a shrewd observer might have noticed that a glance of intelligence passed between the disciples of the single-stick and those of the sock and buskin.

"Permission I will never give," said his worship ; "we are a godly people here, and have no taste for rascal players. As His Majesty's representative, I am bound to encourage no amusements that are not respectable."

"But our young king," interrupted Mr. Farren, "is himself a great patron of the theatre."

This was worse than a heavy blow at single-stick ; and the Mayor was the more wroth as he had no argument ready to meet it. After looking

angry for a moment, a bright thought struck him.

“Ay, ay, sir! you will not, I hope, teach a Mayor either fact or duty. We know, sir, what the king (God bless him!) patronises. His Majesty does not patronise strollers. He goes regularly to an *established* church, sir, and to an *established* theatre; and so, sir, I, as Mayor, support only establishments. Good heavens! What would become of the throne and the altar if a Mayor of Sarum were to do otherwise.”*

As Mr. Farren did not well know, he could not very readily tell; and as he stood there mute, the Mayor continued to pour down upon the player and his vocation a shower of obloquy. At every allusion which he made to his predilection for amusements that were respectable and instructive, the single-stick players drew themselves up, cried *Hear! hear!* and looked down upon the actors with an air of burlesque contempt. The actors, men and women, returned the look with a burst of uncontrollable laughter. The Mayor took this for deliberate insult, aimed at himself and at what he chose to patronise. His protégés looked the more proud and became louder than ever in their self-applauding *Hear! hear!* The players

* *Vide* Dr. Doran's "Knights and their Days."

the while shrieked with laughter. Even Mr. Farren and Lizzy could not refrain from risibility, for the single-stick players were actually members of the company, who had preceded the main body of the performers. One was Mr. Frederick Fitzmontague, who was great in *Hamlet*; the other was the ruffian in melodramas and the clown in pantomimes, and as he did a little private business of his own, by accepting an engagement from a religious society during the dull season of the year, to preach on the highways against theatricals, Mr. Osmond Brontere was usually known by the cognomen of "Missionary Jack."

So the manager was taken off to the lock-up, and little Lizzy, weeping bitterly, was taken charge of by some members of the company. It was raining heavily at the time, but during the night it ceased, and so hard a frost set in that Salisbury looked as though built upon a sheet of ice. In the market-place lived a respectable upholsterer of the name of Burroughs, and early on the Christmas morning a boy stood at the door of the shop, watching a little girl who cautiously and stealthily advanced across the slippery ground. The girl was Lizzy Farren, who was carrying a bowl of boiling milk—her own scanty breakfast—to her father, locked up in the iron cage. She advanced so slowly that the milk ran the risk of

being frozen before reaching its destination. Young Burroughs watched her, and, seeing her fear of falling, offered to carry the bowl, but she refused to allow any one but herself to carry her father's breakfast to him on such a morning. The lad had already made friends with some of the actors, so he knew all about Lizzy, and of her affection for her erratic sire, so he did not press the offer. He accompanied her to the iron cage, through the bars of which they had the satisfaction of seeing the captive manager drink the warm milk.

Lizzy and her cavalier remained with the prisoner, who looked forward to passing his Christmas Day in that cheerless abode, when a town constable appeared, accompanied by a clerical gentleman, the former being empowered to give liberty to the captive. The constable told the manager that his liberation was due to the intercession of the Reverend Mr. Snodgrass, who had that morning arrived in Salisbury. Little Lizzy looked attentively at the pseudo-clerical dignitary, and, much to her amazement, recognised him to be none other than Mr. Osmond Brontere, *alias* Missionary Jack, *alias* the Reverend Mr. Snodgrass.

"Oh, Mr. Brontere!" she exclaimed in delight, and soon as they were safely out of hearing of the constable, "how did you ever manage it?"

"Well," said the enterprising actor, with a

laugh, "I called upon his worship to inquire what Christmas charities might be acceptable ; and if there were any prisoners whom my humble means might liberate. He named your father, and the company have paid what was necessary. His worship was not inexorable, particularly as I incidentally told him His Majesty patronised the other day an itinerant company at Datchet. And as for *how* I did it ! I rather think I am irresistible in the dress in which poor Will Havard, only two years ago, played *Old Adam*. A little ingenuity, as you see, has made it look very like a rector's costume ; and besides," concluded Missionary Jack, "I sometimes think that Nature intended me for the Church."

Lizzy Farren danced and sang prettily, and her father found her very useful to send her on to dance and sing between the acts. For three years she was a member of this strolling company, and her name even appears in some old provincial play-bills quoted by Tate Wilkinson. Another Christmas Eve had come, and Lizzy—who had now lost her father—was with the strolling players at Wakefield. They were going to give a grand Christmas pantomime, called "Old Mother Red-cap," in which would appear "The Young Queen of Columbines," "Miss Elizabeth Farren." All the young bachelors of the town were besieging

the box-office, and one in particular—a bright-looking artied clerk, read the playbill attentively. At this juncture, who should step forth on her way home from rehearsal, but the Queen of Columbines. She was a pretty, fairy-looking girl of just fifteen, and the susceptible hearts of the male youth of Wakefield, who were congregated at the box-office, were not proof against her fascinations. It had been freezing hard all day, and as the youthful actress proceeded down the street she had many an offer made her of an arm to help her over the slippery pavement. In a courteous and dignified manner she refused all advances, and succeeded in getting rid of all her suitors, save one, who persisted in following her. Seeing the girl was seriously annoyed, the lawyer's clerk stepped forward without any ceremony, took the young lady's arm in his, and constituted himself her champion. Her persecutors sneaked away; then the Knight and the Lady looked into each other's face. It would be difficult to say which was the more surprised, Lizzy Farren to see young Burroughs, who had succoured her upon that frosty Christmas morning when she carried the warm milk to her father, or the incipient lawyer to see in the pretty young actress before him the forlorn little girl who gave up her meagre breakfast to her captive sire.

“The young Queen of Columbines” was enthu-

siastically received upon her first appearance upon the stage at Wakefield. In company with an ecstatic stage-struck amateur, young Burroughs went to see the performance. "What a treasure," said the amateur, "would this girl be in Liverpool." The faithful Burroughs then and there offered to accept an engagement for Lizzy, and hearing that Younger, the manager of the Liverpool theatre, was at a neighbouring tavern, he left the theatre intent upon pleading Lizzy's cause with the great man.

"I wonder," said the manager, "if your young friend is the child of the Cork surgeon, who married the daughter of Wright, the Liverpool brewer; if so, she's clever. Besides, why——"

"Why she'll make your fortune!" exclaimed the lawyer's clerk. "She is the granddaughter of your Liverpool brewer, sings like a nightingale, and is worth five pounds a week to you at least. Come and hear her."

Younger went to hear her, and was more than charmed with her singing, dancing, and general appearance. The result was that before she left the theatre that night she was engaged by the Liverpool manager at the munificent salary of two pounds ten shillings per week, and to find her own satin shoes and stockings.

It was upon this night that Lizzy Farren and

her friend Mr. Burroughs uttered the prophetic speeches—

“Mr. Burroughs,” said the girl gratefully to the lawyer’s clerk as he escorted her and her mother home, “this is the second Christmas you have made happy for us. I hope you may live to be Lord Chief Justice.”

“Thank you, Lizzy,” he replied ; “that is about as likely as that Liverpool will make of the Wakefield Columbine a Countess.”

Lizzy Farren speedily became a favourite with her Liverpool audience. Her relationship to one of its chief citizens, combined with the utmost decorum and rigid propriety of demeanour, enhanced her social as well as her public success ; and, although much sought after, not the faintest breath of scandal ever sullied her fair fame. During the season she remained with Younger in Liverpool, her chief character was *Rosetta*, in “Love in a Village,” and she also sang and danced between the acts. About Christmas time the manager took his troupe upon a provincial tour, which was eminently successful, for Lizzy Farren was the “star” of the company, and having made the same circuit before, she was warmly welcomed.

They elected to spend the Christmas week at Chester, and whilst there occurred one of the

many romantic incidents of Lizzy Farren's curious and romantic life.

The young actress was about to take her first benefit, and as it was to take place on Twelfth Night, Shakspeare's play of the same name was selected for representation, Lizzy playing the part of *Viola*. It was then the custom for the actor or actress to wait upon people and request their presence upon the occasion. Tate Wilkinson did his best to put down the practice, as being derogatory to the dignity of the profession, but it continued to be done long after his time.* In accordance with this usage, Lizzy Farren went from house to house soliciting patronage for her benefit; and at length, wearied and disappointed with her want of success, she was wending her way towards her lodgings, when a horseman rode up. The girl presented her playbills, at the same time soliciting half-a-crown, when, much to her delight, she recognised the equestrian to be Mr. Burroughs.

"Lizzy," he exclaimed in delight, "you shall have such a house in Chester as the old town has not seen since the night when Garrick was here, and played *Richard III.* and *Lord Chalkstone*."

The young barrister kept his word, and the

* The late Charles Dickens ridiculed this custom in many of his works.

theatre was crammed from floor to ceiling. The benefit was a pecuniary success, and, for the third time in her life, Lizzy Farren hailed the budding counsellor as her "good Christmas angel."

This happened in 1776, and after a protracted tour, Younger brought back his company to Liverpool. Lizzy Farren was now a recognised provincial stage queen; and the manager, who was sincerely anxious for her advancement, generously advised her to go to London, although it was acting against his own interests for her to do so. He said she was only wasting her time in the country, and confidently predicted a brilliant future for her. She was not quite eighteen at the time.

So Miss Elizabeth Farren—as all theatrical chronicles respectfully call her from this time forth—came to London, the goal of all brain-workers. This was in 1777. She had very little money, but she had genius, youth, good looks, and two letters of warm recommendation to Colman, the manager of the Haymarket. One letter was from Mr. Burroughs, the other from Younger, who ever treated her with the most fatherly solicitude. Colman at once gave her an engagement, and on the 9th of June, 1777, Miss Farren made her first appearance upon the London stage as *Miss Hardcastle*, in Oliver Goldsmith's Comedy of "She Stoops to Conquer." It was not a part quite

suited to display the young actress's peculiar powers, being merely a character requiring a certain amount of archness and considerable versatility. The refined grace and easy high-breeding, which were the characteristics of Miss Farren's acting, have no place in the conception, which consequently allowed no fair scope for her histrionic gifts. She does not seem to have made any very great impression upon her audience; for the *Dramatic Censor*—which is commonly as ambiguous as the utterances of the Delphic Oracle—says of her:—

“When this young lady has conquered diffidence and acquired more experience; when she learns to tread the stage with more self-possession; to modulate her tones; to correct in spirit, and vary her action, and to give a proper utterance to her feelings by a suitable expression of voice and countenance; in our opinion she will be a most valuable acquisition to our London theatres.”

Miss Farren was not discouraged. She worked hard, and she persevered, and when she played her favourite character of *Rosetta*, in “Love in a Village,” the tide of popular opinion began to set in her favour. Colman was so pleased that he chose her as the original *Rosina*, in the “Spanish Barber,” a play which has subsequently become better known as the opera of “The Barber of Seville.” We may remark, *en passant*, that the

prudish Colman omitted the most comic scene—that wherein the Count is disguised as a drunken trooper. As *Rosina*, Miss Farren scored no success, and does not seem to have added much to her reputation as an actress by her rendering of it. This is all the more contradictory, as the bills show that she played it for nineteen consecutive nights, and also selected it for her benefit.

But at length the opportunity came, when she fulfilled the expectations of her faithful friend, Younger, the manager of the Liverpool theatre. On the 21st of August, 1778, she played *Lady Townly*, in “The Provoked Husband,” and on the 2nd of September following, *Lady Fanciful*, in “The Provoked Wife.” The town saw and appreciated her in her true line. She was declared the reigning queen of comedy, and was unanimously elected to that throne which had been so ably filled by Margaret Woffington.

Miss Farren’s theatrical reputation was now assured. Managers vied with each other in trying to secure her services. She left the Haymarket in October, 1778, and during the season of 1778-79 we find her—by some curious arrangement—playing, on alternate nights, at Covent Garden and Drury Lane. She made her first appearance at the latter theatre in the character of *Charlotte Rusport*, in “The West Indian.” This representa-

tion was no less famous for the success of the young actress, who played the chief character, than for the galaxy of beauty which appeared in it. The four most beautiful women in London—all under twenty—were to be then seen on the stage at Drury Lane. There was the vain and fascinating *Perdita* (Mrs. Mary Robinson), the beautiful and statuesque Miss Walpole, the irrepressible Mrs. John Kemble, and Miss Elizabeth Farren.

Urged thereto by the various managers, Miss Farren essayed tragedy ; but “the robes of *Melpomene*” never sat naturally upon her. Her extreme popularity induced the managers to request her to undertake such parts ; however, upon seeing how utterly opposed they were to her style of acting, they wisely refrained from soliciting any more exhibitions of the kind. She was now the leading comedy actress at Drury Lane, and after the year 1779 never acted in any other but this great national theatre, save for a few nights at Leeds and York in 1787-89, and a brief visit she paid to Dublin, during Daly’s management of Smock Alley. Of this latter engagement, all her biographers say there are no particulars extant ; so that the following verbatim extract, copied from a scrap of an Irish newspaper, bearing the date “Dublin, September 25, 1791” contains

probably the only information to be had upon the subject :—

“ Miss Farren, having accomplished her engagement with our manager, has sailed for England, preparatory to her winter engagement in London. Fame and fortune have most conspicuously accompanied this celebrated actress on her trip to this country. To use a mercantile phrase, the *nett proceeds* of her voyage to Ireland exceeded 1800*l*.”*

In 1780, Miss Farren found a character admirably suited to her, in *Cecilia*, in Miss Lee’s “Chapter of Accidents.” The name was an appropriate one in every sense of the word, so many accidents occurred to retard its representation. The authoress first offered it to Harris, of Covent Garden, who treated her very badly about it. He said he would accept it on condition that she would make certain alterations ; she did so, and he then backed out of his agreement. She then sent it anonymously to Colman, who recognised its merit, and accepted it at once. But this Harris was an unprincipled man in every sense of the word, and Miss Lee was very fortunate to have got safely out of his clutches. The beautiful

* This notice is in the possession of Mr. William Farren, Vaudeville Theatre, to whose courtesy I am indebted for permission to copy it.—E. O. B.

—and stuttring—Mrs. Inchbald was not quite so fortunate ; for Harris made some gallant advances to her, from which she rescued herself by tugging stoutly at his hair. When relating the assault she exclaimed : “ If he had w-w-w-worn a w-w-wig, I w-w-was a ru-ru-ined w-woman.”

Sheridan was the manager of Drury Lane at this time ; and from some cause or other the treasury department was not in a very flourishing condition. This led to annoyances between the manager and the performers, and resulted in some of them going elsewhere. Mrs. Abingdon was one of the first to lead the exodus from Drury Lane. She and Sheridan quarrelled irreconcilably ; but the manager was very wary, and it is ten chances to one but that he purposely picked a quarrel with her, in order to induce her to quit the theatre, and leave the field of comedy clear for the new star, Miss Elizabeth Farren. The latter must have been gratified by her rival's removal, for she now stood alone—the recognised first comedy actress of the company of the great national theatre. Moreover, it permanently relieved her from the necessity of playing utility parts, uncongenial to her attributes.

Mrs. Abingdon was one of the best *Lady Teazles* that ever trod the stage ; yet, immediately after her secession from Drury Lane, when Miss Farren

played the same character, she was pronounced almost superior to her. The part had been originally created by Mrs. Abingdon, who always—and justly—considered it her best character. But if she played it well, Miss Farren played it better ; and during the earlier part of the season 1782-83, the announcement of the part of *Lady Teazle*, by Miss Farren, never failed to draw a crowded house.

But, later in the season, comedy was eclipsed by tragedy, for Sarah Siddons made her first appearance at Drury Lane in the character of *Isabella*, in “The Fatal Marriage.” From that time forth, until her retirement thirty years afterwards, she occupied the tragic throne without a rival. “She was, unquestionably, the greatest tragic actress that ever trod the stage in any age or country. Such personal and mental qualities were never combined in another. But she lacked versatility, and should never have trespassed on the realms of Thalia.”

Miss Farren had now been for several seasons acknowledged as the first comedy actress on the stage. Her private worth was no less known and respected than her brilliant public career was admired. During the London seasons all the chief families of distinction vied with each other in showing her every attention. It cannot be sup-

posed that so beautiful and attractive a woman was without many suitors ; but, despite the publicity of her life, she was so guarded in her conduct that not one of them could boast of having been encouraged above the other. Charles James Fox may, perhaps, be excepted. He pursued her pertinaciously, and she is said to have encouraged his attentions until she found they were liberal and anti-matrimonial. He was then at once dismissed, and the Earl of Derby became Miss Farren's avowed admirer. She met this nobleman first at some private plays, which she was invited to supervise, at the Duke of Richmond's town residence in Privy Gardens. In these performances the Earl of Derby, Lord Henry Fitzgerald, and the Honourable Mrs. Damer sustained the leading parts. The Earl of Derby was at this time married, but living separately from his wife. The cause of this arrangement it is now unnecessary to conjecture. Suffice to say that such was the case ; and that it soon became whispered abroad that he and Miss Farren were conditionally engaged to each other, and that the marriage would take place as soon as circumstances permitted. Finally this engagement became publicly known ; but such was the rigid caution practised on both sides, that not a suspicion of scandal sullied the intimacy. Like Dean Swift and Stella,

they never saw each other save in the presence of a third person.

“These prospective arrangements,” says a recent anonymous writer, “between enamoured ladies and gentlemen, depending on the life or death of an existing impediment or incumbrance, are by no means uncommon ; neither do the parties involved lose caste or estimation in the eyes of the world by being prepared for a possible contingency, should it present itself. But is this precision quite in accordance with high and pure principles of morality and religion ? A husband may not live with his wife, nor a wife with her husband, by mutual consent, without moral delinquency ; still they are legally and religiously joined until death or the Divorce Court releases them. True, they may agree to live apart on terms ; but be the motive of separation what it may, or the blame, if any, on one side or divided, it requires keen casuistry to determine that therefore A and C may lawfully arrange a future marriage, on the speculation that the intervening B will, some fine day, think proper to make a vacancy. This, viewed as a pure case of conscience, would form an interesting topic for the wisdom of the law lords, or the Consistorial Court, should either be able to find leisure for an abstract question.”

The foregoing is not a matter for us to attempt

to decide. Circumstances alter cases, and the respect and esteem in which Miss Farren was held in private life, is a pretty good guarantee of what the society of the period thought of the engagement. In every possible way her lover proved the sincerity and honourable nature of his attachment, a feeling which she fully returned. The following lines, written by the Earl of Derby, show the estimation in which he held her :—

TO MISS FARREN, ON HER BEING ONE DAY ABSENT FROM CHURCH.

While wondering angels, while they looked from high,
Observed thy absence, with a holy sigh,
'To them a bright ethereal seraph said—
“ Blame not the conduct of th' exalted maid;
Where'er she goes, her steps can never stray;
Religion walks, companion of her way;
She goes with every virtuous thought impressed,
Heaven on her face, and heaven within her breast.”

At this period, there was concentrated in Drury Lane an array of dramatic talent which has never, before nor since, been the monopoly of a single theatre. There were Mrs. Siddons, Miss Elizabeth Farren, Mrs. Jordan, Miss Pope, Mrs. Crouch, Mrs. Ward, and Mrs. Wilson amongst the ladies, all of whom were Irish by one or both parents, save Mrs. Siddons and Mrs. Wilson. Amongst the men were, John Kemble, the two Palmers, Thomas King, the younger Bannister, Parsons, Suett, Moody and Dodd. In the present day, there are so many theatres in London, that the talent is

scattered. At that time there were but two principal theatres, and even they, with the amount of histrionic wealth which could ever be brought to support a performance, the manager was very often on the verge of bankruptcy. Here and there, in our own day, we occasionally find the public press crying out against managers for vitiating the public taste by spectacular dramas; whereas, the sin really lies at the door of the public. Even with such a company as that just named, and under the classic sceptre of John Kemble, Shakspeare was laid upon the shelf, and, in desperation, a play was produced in which horses and a white elephant were the chief performers!

In 1784 Miss Farren acted *Julia Hardy*, in a play called "Reparation." It was written by a gunpowder manufacturer of the name of Andrews, who, however, introduced nothing inflammable into his many plays, for they all hung fire. On the 17th of May, in the same year, she played in Dryden's "Amphitryon," with John Kemble; and on the 24th of the same month spoke the address at Mrs. Bellamy's benefit, which has been already referred to in the memoir of that actress.

From 1786, until her retirement in April, 1797, Miss Elizabeth Farren continued to act at Drury Lane. She must have gone through enormous mental and physical labour during each theatrical

season ; for the playbills show her never to have been absent from her post. She was a most conscientious actress. She always rigidly adhered to the words of the author, and never spared either time or pains in trying fully to comprehend the author's conception of a character. Like Peg Woffington, she never refused to play for a benefit, and her urbanity and proverbially sweet disposition endeared her to all connected with the theatre. But "chaste as ice, pure as snow ! Thou shalt not escape calumny !" was fulfilled even in the case of Miss Farren. It happened immediately after her marriage with the Earl of Derby, when a scurrilous pamphlet appeared, reflecting upon her womanly honour. It was, however, successfully refuted, the only charge in this so-called "Life," that was established, being the poverty of her youth.

The first original part worthy of her genius that Miss Farren created was that of *Lady Emily Gaylove*, in General Burgoyne's comedy of "The Heiress." The cast comprised all the strength of the company, save Mrs. Siddons. The play ran for thirty nights, and was pronounced the best comedy since "The School for Scandal." Mrs. Siddons and Miss Farren seldom had an opportunity of acting together. Their walks were so distinct, that it was very unusual for both to be

suites properly in the same play. But in May, 1786, both actresses appeared together in "The Way to Keep Him," acted for the benefit of the Theatrical Fund. They also acted together for Kemble's benefit, as *Belinda* and *Lady Restless*, in "All in the Wrong."

In 1787, and again in 1789, Miss Farren accepted a short provincial engagement at Leeds and York during the race week. By command of the Prince of Wales, she played one night at the latter town, when the receipts were close on 200*l.*, an enormous sum to have been taken, at that time, at any theatre out of London.

Miss Farren did not often essay Shakspearian characters. Her *Rosalind* was universally commended, but she had so great an objection to what are technically called, in stage parlance, "breeches parts," that she at length ceased to appear in that character. In 1790 Kemble revived the "Tempest," altered by Dryden, and also with some interpolations of his own, for the rage for mutilating the immortal text was then in all its fury. Dryden had introduced an excrescence which he called *Dorinda*, and this fell to the lot of Miss Farren. To her credit be it spoken that it was her acting of this character—outrageous as was the introduction—which saved the play from being utterly condemned.

In 1791* she took part in the last performance that was ever given at old Drury Lane. Whilst the new theatre was being built the company acted in the Opera House, in the Haymarket. Their first performance there was preceded by a prologue written by James Cobb, and called "Poor Old Drury." It possessed considerable humour, and in it the actors are represented as speaking in their own proper persons. Unfortunately this prologue was considered so ephemeral that it never was printed, but the following is the traditional account of it ;—"Barrymore and Palmer began, and after lamenting the distresses of Wrihten, the prompter, gave a ludicrous description of the removal of the scenery from one house to the other. The ocean was washed away by a shower of rain, and the clouds were obliged to be transported under an umbrella. Alexander's triumphal car was smashed to pieces by a hackney coach at the corner of St. Martin's Lane ; and the jarvey, being blamed for the accident, insisted that he was on the right side, and that Mr. Alexander, if he pleased, might take his number ! Wrihten next entered, bewailing his embarrassments, and his departure

* It was in this year that Walpole wrote to the Miss Berrys :—"I have had no letter from you these ten days, though the east wind has been as constant as Lord Derby, not to his wife, but to Miss Farren."

from Old Drury. He was called for by a dozen at a time, who required his instructions as to what they were to do. A compliment was here introduced to Miss Farren. The call-boy shouted out that Miss Farren wanted the prompter. 'That can't be!' exclaimed Wroughten. 'Everybody knows that Miss Farren never wants the prompter!'

"Parsons then came on in a rage, and vowed he would never appear in comedy again. Tragedy was his vein, and the managers should not bully him out of it, as he was determined to be *heard*. Here he roared aloud, and Phillimore from the gallery called to him not to strain his lungs in bellowing like a bull, as he could hear him perfectly well. The audience, not understanding this was a part in the piece, hissed poor Phillimore, and cried 'Throw him over!' for what they considered an impertinent interruption. Wewitzer, as a French dancing-master devoted to the classic models, proposed that, according to the rule of Monsieur Démosthène, *action* should be chiefly regarded; and therefore that while Parsons delivered the speech he, Wewitzer, should embody the sentiments by conformable gestures. Upon this principle he objected to the usual practice of *starting* at the entrance of the *apparition*, and insisted upon the propriety of *bowing* with *grace* and *reverence*, as Hamlet knows it to be the ghost of his *papa*!

This produced roars of laughter. Bland came in as an Italian singer, declaring that nothing but *opera* should be performed in that place ; and he and the French critic embraced fraternally and retired, observing that *dancing* and the *opera* should always go together, in contempt of *sense* and *nature*. Harlequin and his usual pantomimical associates presented themselves, but were told by Wrihten that there would be no employment for them, as the sterling merit of the British drama would, for a season at least, be fully sufficient for the entertainment of a British audience. Harlequin lamented his dismissal, but thought he would soon be wanted ; nevertheless he gave the audience a parting proof of his magic power. He struck the scene, which rose, and formed a view of Mount Parnassus, with Apollo and other mythological deities. The Muses appeared in succession, and the prelude concluded with a grand chorus."

The new theatre in Drury Lane was opened on the 12th of March, 1794, when there was performed a grand selection of Handel's music, commencing with the Coronation Anthem. The new building was erected at a cost of 129,000*l.*, and was the finest that had been built in the British dominions. "Macbeth" and "The Virgin Unmasked" were the first dramatic performances

which took place there; and it was upon this occasion that John Kemble, who played *Macbeth*, tried the effect of an empty chair, instead of the time-honoured ghost of Banquo. But the pit and gallery objected to the omission, clamoured for their pet spectre, and carried the day. Miss Farren spoke the epilogue, in which she assured the audience that they need be in no dread of fire, as they had water enough in the theatre to drown them all at a moment's notice. The scene then shifted, and showed a real lake on the stage, with a boat in which was a man who rowed it to and fro, whilst the band played, "And did you not hear of a jolly young waterman." Then an iron curtain descended, leaving Miss Farren between it and the footlights. She informed the audience that should fire break out on the stage it would be thus shut out from the spectators:—

No; we assure you, generous benefactors,
'Twill only burn the scenery and the actors.

Despite all these precautions, new Drury Lane was burnt to the ground in February, 1809, just fifteen years after its erection. There were suspicions of foul play, but this has never been proved. Drury Lane the Third now rears its stately head upon the same site; let us hope it may be saved from the fate of its predecessor.

For several seasons more we find Miss Elizabeth

Farren yet steadily and brilliantly pursuing her profession. Little is known concerning her life at this period. From the playbills may be gleaned a list of the characters which she played. As *Emily Tempest*, in "The Wheel of Fortune," she held up John Kemble's train in 1795, and played *Helen* to his *Edward Mortimer*, in "The Iron Chest," in which—from the combined effects of opium and asthma—he signally failed. During the following two seasons—1796-97—Miss Farren and John Kemble played *Valentine* and *Angelica*, in "Love for Love;" *Falkland* and *Julia*, in "The Rivals;" *Lord* and *Lady Townly*, in "The Provoked Husband;" and in many other characters.

And now the time was rapidly approaching when the brilliant actress was to reap the reward of her constancy to her lover. On the 14th of March, 1797, died the Countess of Derby; and, in less than two months after her death, her place was filled by Miss Elizabeth Farren. Some have characterised this as indecent haste, but, virtually, the Countess had been dead to her husband for many years, so that any semblance of regret at the severance of the legal tie would have been sheer affectation. On the 8th of April, exactly one month before her wedding-day, Miss Farren took her leave of the stage, selecting for her farewell her

famous character of *Lady Teazle*.* The cast was a powerful and a memorable one:—

Lady Teazle...	...	...	MISS ELIZABETH FARREN.
Sir Peter	...	...	MR. KING.
Charles Surface	...	...	MR. WROUGHTON.
Careless	...	...	MR. CHARLES KEMBLE.
Joseph Surface	...	...	MR. JOHN PALMER.
Crabtree	...	...	MR. SUETT.
Mrs. Candour	...	...	MISS POPE.

At first Miss Farren seemed in good spirits; but as the play proceeded her emotion became apparent to the audience. It was with the utmost difficulty she delivered her concluding speech to *Lady Sneerwell*:—

“Let me also request that you will make my compliments to the scandalous college of which you are president, and inform them that Lady Teazle, Licentiate, begs leave to return the diploma they granted her, *as she leaves off practice, and kills characters no longer.*” As she concluded, she burst into tears. Amidst the applause of the audience, King led her forward, whilst Wroughton spoke the following lines which were written for the occasion, and added to the “tag”:—

* “I recollect (not the admirable acting in the famous screen scene, but) the circumstance of seeing Lord Derby leaving his private box to creep to her (Miss Farren) behind the screen, and of course we all looked with impatience for the discovery, hoping the screen would fall a little too soon, and show to the audience Lord Derby as well as Lady Teazle.”—*Vide* Miss Wynne’s “Diary of a Lady of Quality.”

But ah! this night adieu the joyous mien,
When Mirth's loved favourite quits the mimic scene!
Startled Thalia would the assent refuse,
But *Truth* and *Virtue* sued, and won the *Muse*.
Awed by sensations it could ill express,
Though mute the tongue, the bosom feels not less;
Her *speech* your kind indulgence oft has known,
Be to her *silence* now that kindness shown;
No'er from her mind th' endeared record will part,
But live, the proudest feeling of a grateful heart.

On the 8th of May, 1797, following, Miss Elizabeth Farren was married to the Earl of Derby, and was in due time presented at Court, where she was received by Royalty with every mark of esteem. To show her respect for the Countess of Derby's private worth, as well also as to silence some lying and libellous stories which were afloat concerning her, Queen Charlotte selected her to make one in the procession at the marriage of the Princess Royal.

She was always a favourite at Court, and one evening, many years after her marriage, was on her way to Windsor to spend the Christmas there right royally; but on the journey the carriage broke down, and the servants were in distress. Just then a carriage, occupied by a good-natured looking elderly gentleman, drove up. He offered the Countess a seat in his vehicle, which she gladly accepted, as he said that he also was on his way to Windsor Castle.

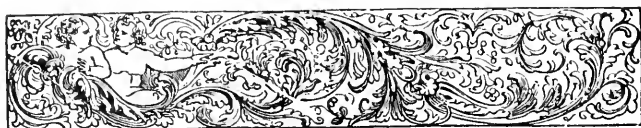
"I have been thinking of old times, my Lady

Countess, upon this Christmas Eve," said the Lord Chief Justice of England, "and am scarcely surprised to meet you. How many years is it since I stood at my father's shop-door in Salisbury, and watched your perilous passage over the market-place with a bowl of milk?"

"Not so long, at all events," she answered, with a smile, "but that I recollect my poor father would have lost his breakfast but for your assistance."

"The time is not long for memory," replied the judge, "nor is Salisbury as far from Windsor as Dan is from Beersheba, yet how wide the distance between the breakfast at the cage-door in Salisbury and the Christmas dinner to which we are both proceeding at the palace of the King!"

The Countess of Derby had three children—the eldest, a son, who lived to be seventeen; a daughter, who died at the age of ten; and a second daughter, the late Countess of Wilton. In private as well as in professional life no one was more respected than Elizabeth Farren, Countess of Derby. She lived many years to enjoy her honours, and died, at the age of seventy, on the 29th of April, 1829. The Earl survived her but a few years.



MARIA POPE.

BORN, A.D. 1775. DIED, A.D. 1803.

T*HBIS INTACTA*—the city of Waterford—has given to the stage two of its most distinguished comedy actresses, Kitty Clive and Dorothy Jordan. But another actress from the maiden city claims a place upon the roll of histrionic fame—and the robes of Melpomene, as yet unworn by an Irishwoman, never clothed a more fitting subject than Maria Campion. She is one of the very few actresses who have risen to eminence in their profession, yet concerning whose private life little or nothing is known. In 1798 she married Mr. Pope, a widower, whose first wife, Miss Younge, had also been celebrated as an actress.

Maria Campion was born in Waterford, in 1775, where her father, who was a respectable merchant, died when she was yet but a child, leaving a wife and two daughters totally unprovided for. Some relatives, seeing the destitute condition of the widow and orphans, came forward and offered to

take charge of Maria, the eldest girl. She was, even then, studious and thoughtful, and—considering the scarcity of books at the time—very well read for her age. She was particularly fond of dramatic literature, and an old volume of Shakspeare was her constant companion and delight.

At this time the Waterford Theatre held no inconsiderable rank amongst provincial playhouses. Companies from Smock Alley not infrequently went there for a season. Daly, one of the best of provincial managers, often took his company to Waterford; and upon one occasion, when they played “The Orphan” there, Maria Campion witnessed the performance which sealed her fate. It was the first time she had ever been in a theatre, and her awed delight and admiration knew no bounds. Upon her return home, the house rang with the sighs of *Monimia*; she could talk of nothing else; and nothing could induce her to swerve from her fixed determination to become a tragic actress.

Her friends endeavoured to procure for her an interview with Daly, the Dublin manager. But the great man was not to be approached so easily. He objected to having an interview with a “stage-struck child,” and handed her over to Hitchcock, the stage-manager. Hitchcock was kind-hearted,

shrewd, and clear-headed, and one of the best dramatic judges of his own or any other day. He saw the girl, listened to her tale, said she was a fine promising child, but much too young to think of entering so difficult a profession. She was bitterly disappointed, and as the stage-manager was about to depart, she seized him by the coat and exclaimed imploringly—

“Oh ! sir ! but hear me !”

Hitchcock started. He had had as great an experience as any manager living of would-be dramatic stars, but, as he afterwards admitted, never before had he heard such intense, untutored pathos as in these few words. The stage-manager sat down whilst the girl recited some passages from “The Orphan.” He was more than charmed with her ; he prophesied great things for her, gave her some good advice, and promised her that, next season, he would give her a trial upon the Dublin stage.

Accordingly, in 1792, she made her first appearance in the character of *Monimia*, in “The Orphan.” It was an important part for a first attempt, and the youthful actress was so nervous, that when she first went on her terrors so overwhelmed her that she fainted in the stage-manager’s arms. However, her appearance had prepossessed the audience in her favour, and she

was called for with enthusiastic acclamations. Her first speech was listened to with much attention. She delivered it with so much tenderness, and with an amount of feeling so conformable to the character, that the applause was redoubled. Thus encouraged, she went brilliantly through the whole play, and that first night stamped Maria Campion's reputation as a tragic actress.

For several seasons she acted at the Dublin Theatre, playing *Juliet*, *Desdemona*, and other Shakspearian heroines, together with characters in many of the old stock tragedies. She became the recognised tragic actress of the Irish stage, and sometimes gave her services at the Fishamble Street Theatre, then flourishing under Jones's management. From Dublin she went to York, whither her fame had already spread, and drew crowded houses. She was equally well received at Liverpool, and returned to Dublin with increased reputation.

About this time Lewis, the comedian, saw her act in "The Orphan," and was so struck with her powers that he recommended her to the management of Covent Garden. She was immediately engaged for her favourite character of *Monimia*, and in 1797 made her *début* in London. She charmed her metropolitan no less than her provincial audiences. *Cordelia*, *Indiana*, *Jane*

Shore, and *Juliet* were amongst her most successful representations, and her appearance was always hailed with marks of the highest approbation. Of her *Juliet*, a contemporary critic says :—

“It is one of the most interesting we ever saw. The delusion of the scene is not necessary to make us fancy her the very character the author designed to exhibit ; but her feeling, her delicacy, her animation, where the part required it, are above all praise. The scene in which she swallows the poison was never executed with more judgment ; but there were other excellences which our limits will not allow us to notice. The vindication of her lord’s conduct, ‘Blistered be thy tongue!’ to the nurse ; and the majestic contempt with which she treats her when she discovers the selfishness of her motives, ‘Amen ! Amen !’ together with all the scenes with Romeo, were admirable. Indeed, the whole performance is so full of beauties and so free from defects that we are not surprised at the play’s having run eight nights already, without the attraction of a new dress, scene, dirge, procession, or any other adventitious circumstance whatever.”

In private life Miss Campion was distinguished for her amiability and unassuming manners. In 1798 she married Mr. Pope, a respectable actor, who never rose much above mediocrity. She

continued to act after her marriage, and on July 10th, 1803, played *Desdemona*, at Covent Garden, for Cooper's benefit. When about half-way through the performance she was taken suddenly ill, and Mrs. Ansdell was obliged to take her place and finish the part. Mrs. Pope was immediately taken home, but for some days no fears were entertained of any fatal termination to her illness. On the 18th, however, as she was seated on a sofa talking to a friend, she suddenly fell upon the floor, and upon being raised up expired without a word or a struggle in a few moments. The *Gentleman's Magazine* for the same year gives the following account of her death :—

“On examination by a surgeon it was found her disorder was apoplectic, brought on, it is supposed, by exertion and anxiety in her profession. Some of the veins in the head had burst, and occasioned her death. The public will no doubt deeply regret the loss of an actress who has so much delighted them by the spirit, feeling, and judgment with which she performed. Her friends in private life will equally lament the early death of an amiable companion. Her remains were interred in Westminster Abbey on the 25th, near those of the former Mrs. Pope (late Miss Younge).”

At the time of her death Maria Pope was only in her twenty-eighth year, and had been but ten

years before the public. Her career during her short but brilliant life was earnest of greater things to come. Had Death spared her, there is reason to believe that even to her great countrywoman, Miss O'Neill, she would scarcely have stood second in the ranks as a tragic actress.





MISS O'NEILL.

(LADY WRIXON BEECHER.)

BORN, A.D. 1791. DIED, A.D. 1872.

ABOUT the very time when Maria Campion supplicated Hitchcock, the stage-manager of the Dublin Theatre, to allow her to recite before him, another provincial stage-manager—who found it very hard to keep the wolf from the door—was one day saluted with the news that unto him was a child born.

A baby-daughter, born, apparently, to squalor, to indigence, and to that fight for bare existence which was then an attendant upon the career of a strolling player. Moreover, they were troublous times in Ireland at this period, and it can scarcely be supposed that the stage-manager of the little theatre in Drogheda felt particularly rejoiced at the prospect of having another mouth to feed.

Under such circumstances did the future great tragic actress make her first appearance upon the stage of Life. Like her famous contemporary, Kean, she was nursed in indigence. Her educa-

tion was neglected, for the profits of a provincial actor—never very great—were then very scanty, and she had no opportunity of early and careful training. Often might little Eliza O'Neill be seen running barefoot through the dirty, steep, narrow streets of Drogheda, passing to and from the humble school where she received the only instruction she ever had in her life. She had soon to commence to work for her living. When yet but a very little girl her father used to introduce her in juvenile parts, so that she became early accustomed to appear before the footlights. Her first juvenile character was as the little son of King Edward, the young *Duke of York*, which she played to her father's *Duke of Glo'ster*, in "Richard III." Her performance excited a good deal of admiration, and the juvenile prodigy was no small attraction to the theatre. When about twelve she was put into more important parts, and such was the opinion of her talent that she was offered an engagement by Mr. Talbot, the lessee of the Irish Northern Circuit. Eliza O'Neill speedily became a favourite with the company and with her audiences, and remained with Mr. Talbot for between two and three years.

Her engagement with Jones, of the Crow Street Theatre, Dublin, was due in some measure to an accident. When returning from her provincial

tour, in company with her father and brother, on their way to Drogheda, they were obliged to stay for the night at an hotel in Dublin. On this very day the manager of the Crow Street Theatre was in a dilemma. His principal actress, Miss Walstein, who had been announced for the part of *Juliet*, refused to appear without an increase of salary. The story is thus told by the garrulous Mike Kelly :—

“Miss Walstein, who was the heroine of the Dublin stage, and a great and deserved favourite, was to open the theatre in the character of *Juliet*. Mr. Jones received an intimation from Miss Walstein that, without a certain increase of salary and other privileges, she would not come to the house. Mr. Jones had arrived at the determination to shut up his theatre sooner than submit to what he thought an unwarrantable demand, when MacNally, the box-keeper, who had been the bearer of Miss Walstein’s message, told Mr. Jones that it would be a pity to shut up the house ; that there was a remedy, if Mr. Jones chose to avail himself of it. ‘The girl, sir,’ said he, ‘who has been so often recommended to you as a promising actress, is now at an hotel in Dublin, with her father and brother, where they have just arrived, and is proceeding to Drogheda to act in her father’s theatre there. I have heard it said by persons who have seen her

that she plays *Juliet* extremely well, and is very young and very pretty. I am sure that she would be delighted to have the opportunity of appearing before a Dublin audience, and, if you please, I will make her the proposal.' The proposal was made and accepted, and on the following Saturday 'the girl,' who was Miss O'Neill, made her *début* on the Dublin stage as *Juliet*. The audience was delighted ; she acted the part several nights, and Mr. Jones offered her father and brother very liberal terms, which were thankfully accepted."

The *Irish Dramatic Censor* of the time repeatedly mentions Miss O'Neill's performances. The notices are, in many instances, rather lengthy ; but it would be unfair to omit them in any memoir of this actress, as they present so faithfully the current opinion respecting her powers at the time.

"Oct. 10th.—Miss O'Neill's first appearance. None of the gentlemen who support this publication attended, mistakingly imagining that it would be one of those first appearances with which the town has been so repeatedly nauseated."

"Oct. 12th.—

"ROMEO AND JULIET. JULIET, MISS O'NEILL.

"We have seen *Juliet* played by as good, but never by so *young* an actress. Of course she must

(for some years to come, at least) stand unrivalled in such characters."

"Oct. 28th.—TIMOUR THE TARTAR.—The great object deserving critical attention is *Zorilda*—the *Zorilda* of Miss O'Neill. A young actress has burst as suddenly as unexpectedly upon the town, who appears to be gifted by Nature with every rich requisite necessary to place her at the head of her profession. The figure of this young lady is fascinating to the highest degree of interest; her voice—

Sweet as the warbling of the vernal wood—

is rich, powerful, melodious; her delineation of character is correct (far beyond her years). No studied inflection—no artificial pauses. Not one tragic scream has yet grated on the public ear, nor has a face, the lines of which are capable of every delicate feminine expression, been worked up into the forced contortions of horror or the unnatural convulsions of demoniac fury—such is Miss O'Neill—such was the representative of *Zorilda*.

"*Charlotte Rusport* has been so exquisitely performed by the Abingdon, Miss Farren (now Countess of Derby), and our own inimitable Mrs. Daly (nor should we totally forget Mrs. Edwin in the part), that it becomes an effort of much hazard for a young actress, and more particularly

so juvenile a one as Miss O'Neill, to undertake the character. We cannot say her success was complete ; we cannot say that she wholly failed. But it is the Tragic Music (unless we are most egregiously mistaken) that will one day crown this charming young actress with never-dying laurels.

“Miss O'Neill, in our opinion, made too much of the romp of *Lady Teazle*. Her penitential speeches were, however, given in a manner equal, perhaps justice almost demands we should say, superior, to anything ever before seen or heard in the part. But when once the actress has attained this point of the character, there should be an end to all her ladyship's levity. It is true the author has given her one or two short sentences which rather savour of it ; but would they not be much better omitted altogether ? Miss O'Neill's *whole agitation of frame*, when the screen was thrown down, was fine—it was superior acting.”

What an acute and admirable criticism upon the character is the foregoing ! The performance of an old play, called “The Foundling of the Forest,” gave rise to the following critique :—

“Miss O'Neill is too juvenile a figure to personate the unknown female ; but all that was possible, under such circumstances, to achieve, she did ; her pathos made us frequently forget the im-

possibility of her being mother to the elder Farren. Less studied, less scientific than Miss Smith, but far more natural and affecting, the art of the actress and the figure of the woman must decide in favour of the one; but anguish personified, and sighs and tears untutored, put in a caveat, *even against appearances*, in favour of the other."

Omitting many minor, and invariably favourable, criticisms, we come to the first mention of her *Ophelia* :—

"Considering the arduous situation in which Miss O'Neill was placed, as the successor of Miss Walstein in *Ophelia*, she far exceeded our expectations: a more interesting representative of the character never appeared before an audience. Modest and unassuming, lovely in appearance, and eminently successful in those points of the pathetic which are the great adornments of the character, it would be unfair to draw any invidious parallel between her singing and the high and universally acknowledged vocal powers which distinguished her predecessor. Taking, however, the *whole* of the performance into our view, it was such as warrants us in declaring the hitherto increasing reputation of the actress suffered no abatement whatever by her performance of *Ophelia*." Further on, the same critic says :—"Miss O'Neill is rapidly

transforming, or rather forming, herself into the first actress on the stage."

The *Dramatic Censor* abounds with many other well-weighed and favourable notices of Miss O'Neill's acting. It was about this time that Lord William Lennox, then a mere lad, was introduced to her. In after years he wrote as follows concerning the charming actress :—

"At this period Miss O'Neill was about twenty-one years of age ; she was loveliness personified ; her voice was the perfection of melody ; her manner graceful, impassioned, irresistible. Inferior to Mrs. Siddons in dignity and in depicting the more terrible and stormy passions of human nature, she excelled that great mistress of the histrionic art in tenderness and natural pathos. In *Lady Macbeth*, *Constance*, *Volumnia*, *Margaret of Anjou*, and *Lady Randolph*, the Siddons was unrivalled ; while O'Neill in her matchless representation of feminine tenderness, as *Juliet*, *Belvidera*, *Isabella*, and *Mrs. Haller*, was faultless ; and this reminds me of an anecdote of Byron, who was some few years afterwards so jealous of Miss O'Neill's reputation interfering with that of his favourite, Edmund Kean, that in order to guard himself against the risk of becoming a convert, he refused to go and see her act. Tom Moore endeavoured sometimes to persuade him into witnessing at least one of her per-

formances, but his answer was (punning upon Shakspeare's word "unannealed"), "No, I'm resolved to continue un-O'Neiled."*

Miss O'Neill next played the character of *Ellen*, in "The Lady of the Lake," and subsequently *Jane Shore*. She also essayed genteel comedy, in which she was most successful, but her forte evidently lay in tragedy. Mrs. Siddons and Mrs. Pope had passed away, and the throne of tragedy was untenanted. No queen reigned there; but many who saw the young Irish actress, the next season, in the tragedy of "Adelaide, or The Emigrants," adjudged her worthy to fill the vacant throne. The play was written especially for her by Richard Lalor Shiel, and her representation of the chief character much enhanced her professional reputation.

Her private life was irreproachable. She was a most industrious student of her art, and tried to make amends for her want of early education. Miss O'Neill—with that indomitable perseverance which ever characterised her—applied diligently to the task of perfecting herself in all the technical requirements of her profession. To the study of gesture and manner did she especially devote her attention, putting herself under the tuition of

* *Vide* "Celebrities I have Known," vol. i. p. 208.

the most famous teacher of theatrical dancing and gesture then in Dublin—Mr. Henry Garbois. A provincial tour succeeded Miss O'Neill's Dublin engagement. "The great London actor," John Kemble, was at this time starring it through Ireland, and the young actress often had the honour of acting with him. She was everywhere enthusiastically received, for the fame of her *Juliet* had preceded her. In Limerick and Cork her reception exceeded her most sanguine hopes. She received something more tangible than vociferous applause, for on her benefit nights in each of these cities the theatres were crammed from floor to ceiling; and on one occasion the receipts exceeded five hundred pounds. John Kemble—who was even a better business man than he was an actor—was not slow to appreciate her talents; but—probably with the recollection of his illustrious sister fresh in his mind—he was not especially enthusiastic in his admiration of Miss O'Neill. He was not particularly affected towards Miss Walstein, who, in a fit of jealousy, had left the Dublin boards, and was almost a failure in London. Kemble remembered this, and, taking a very business-like view of Miss O'Neill's talents, wrote thus to the London management:—

"There is a very pretty Irish girl here, with a small touch of the brogue on her tongue. She has much quiet talent, and some genius. With a

little expense, and some trouble, we might make her 'an object' for John Bull's admiration in the juvenile tragedy. They call her here ('tis in verse—for they are all poets, all Tom Moores here) the 'Dove,' in contradistinction to Miss Walstein, whom they designate as the 'Eagle.' I recommend the 'Dove' to you, as more likely to please John Bull than the Irish 'Eagle,' who is, in fact, merely a Siddons diluted, and would only be tolerated when Siddons is forgotten."

The London managers acted upon the advice of John Kemble, and offered the young Irish actress an engagement at Drury Lane for three years. She accepted their terms, which were fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen pounds per week; and was at once announced to play the part of *Juliet*, on October 6th, 1814. There have been many successful first appearances, but the *début* of Eliza O'Neill on the London stage is recorded as the most brilliant to be found in theatrical annals. At the end of the first act the audience were enthusiastic, and at the termination of the play their frantic admiration was almost uncontrollable. According to the prevalent custom then, the manager came before the curtain, and announced the comedy of "The Merry Wives of Windsor," for the next evening. But he was assailed with cries of "No! no!—'Romeo and Juliet' "—and so, in de-

ference to public opinion, "Romeo and Juliet" it was.

Fame and fortune were now in Miss O'Neill's grasp. The managers at once increased her salary to thirty pounds a week, and she shared the plaudits of the town with Edmund Kean. Mrs. Siddons was powerful and awe-inspiring, Miss O'Neill was powerful and full of sweetness. Her success is in no small degree to be attributed to the judgment which she invariably displayed in her selection of characters, as the following, copied from an autograph letter of her own, will demonstrate:—

"Clarges Street, Saturday.

"MY DEAR MR. HARRIS,—You must be convinced of my readiness to oblige you, and my great repugnance to refuse any character in which I could appear without destroying the reputation I have gained. I therefore trust that you will yield to my wishes of not performing 'Mary Stewart.' I have again read it with the greatest attention, and wish (if possible) to accept it, but I find that it is out of my power to make a single effect in it. With this impression you will not, I trust, any further press it upon me.

"You say that you have yielded to me in four characters: *Lady Teazle*, *Lady Restless*, *Horatia*, and *Rutland*. You forget that it was my intention

(by the advice of all who were interested in my welfare) to act the part of *Lady Teazle* (my first appearance in comedy) for my own benefit, which was sure to have (from the novelty, if nothing else) the desired effect, but I gave the character to you with pleasure, and acted in it, I think, fifteen or sixteen nights. *Lady Restless* I declined, from my fear of acting it ill, as you know I never wished to appear in comedy, except on one night in the season, perhaps for my benefit; but I consented to your wishes as you seemed to think it would be for your interest, and by so doing I find myself the comic actress of the theatre, or if engaged in tragedy, in a character in which it is impossible to make the *slightest impression*.

“Believe me, it ever was, and still is, my earnest *wish* to do all in my power to forward the interests of Covent Garden, but I cannot entirely sacrifice my feelings (nor can I think that you should wish I should) by appearing nightly before a public, to whom I owe *so much*, and towards whom I feel so grateful, in characters in which there is not one opportunity for discharging what I think but my duty.

“If you wish, I will try what I can do with *Horatia*, if you have nothing better in the meantime.

“Believe me most sincerely yours,

“E. O'NEILL.”

Edmund Kean begged of her to play *Lady Macbeth* to his *Macbeth*, but she steadily refused to do so, being conscious that her powers were inadequate to it. She was perfectly aware that she lacked the terrible intensity necessary to give a true rendering of the character. Save Mrs. Siddons, no actress has ever yet properly interpreted it. Some of the critics of her day did Miss O'Neill much unintentional harm by declaring her to be the rival of Mrs. Siddons. She never was so in any sense of the word. She never essayed the grandeur, the gloom, the solemnity, the intensity of passion which characterised the great sister of the Kembles. Miss O'Neill's line was altogether different—hers was the emotional, loving, sweet, tender, and sad. One great secret of her success lay in her intense sensitiveness and earnestness. She *felt* whatever she portrayed, and cried bitterly during her tragic scenes.* Like her great fellow-artiste, Kean, she founded her style above all things on Nature. She discarded altogether the rigid traditions of the school of John Kemble, and distracted many a faithful and pedantic old actor by the unexpected and irre-

* But two actresses of the present day possess, in any eminent degree, these attributes of intense sensitiveness and earnestness—Mrs. Hermann Vezin and Miss Carlisle—the latter not as well known as she deserves to be.

pressible impulses which she allowed herself to obey when true emotion prompted her.' Her voice was exquisitely modulated to express all the various moods of love, and sympathy, and sorrow: as Kemble said of her, in his elaborately moderate way, "It is not given to Miss O'Neill to astonish, but she never fails to delight; at all events, she is always equal to the occasion."

As a great tragic actress—in her own peculiar line—Miss O'Neill is chiefly remembered; nevertheless, her essays in comedy were very respectable, and deserve more than a passing notice. On the 10th of March, 1816, she made her first appearance in comedy in London as *Lady Teazle*. Owing to her previous success in tragedy, this first performance in high comedy was looked forward to with much interest. But Miss O'Neill passed triumphantly through the ordeal, and was enthusiastically received. She afterwards performed *The Widow Cheerly*, *Mrs. Oakley*, and *Lady Townly*. Her favourite comedy character was that of *Mrs. Haller*, in "The Stranger," in which she made her first appearance with John Kemble, who was so bad with the gout that he had to be led to the wings. The following letter shows what was the current opinion of Miss O'Neill's *Mrs. Haller*:—

Woburn Abbey, Nov. 15th, 1813.

"MY DEAR SIR,—A friend of mine, who has not been in town for some years, and may not be there again for a length of time, is anxious to see the first actress *in my opinion* that ever did or ever will appear, and I am desirous of contributing to his amusement by taking him to our box next week. He is to be with me at Canterbury Monday, and I am most desirous of knowing *a Cabinet Secret*, if you will tell me—that is, what day Miss O'Neill plays in the next week, and if she plays *Mrs. Haller*? If it is settled, and if you will confide so important a secret to me, I will take care that none of those *sub-committee fellows of Drury Lane shall know it*. I return home Friday, therefore any letter directed to Canterbury will find me.

"Yours very faithfully, EPEX.

"P.S.—You must make me known some day to Miss O'Neill; no one can rate her *transcendent talents* higher than *I* do, who have remembered all, *from Siddons to O'Neill*."*

For her benefit she played *Maria*, in "The Citizen," in which she sang and danced so charmingly that her audience were in doubt as to which had the better claim to the fascinating actress, Thalia or Melpomene.

* *Vide* Additional MSS., British Museum MS. Room.

Miss O'Neill had now been five years at Covent Garden, acting there every season. She amassed a considerable fortune, and, to her credit be it spoken, she gave an independence to her aged parents. Her brothers she also helped in their careers. The eldest, John O'Neill, through her interest, received a colonial appointment in Canada, but died on the voyage there. Her second brother, Robert O'Neill, became a pupil of the celebrated surgeon, Mr. Wilson, but met with an accidental death; whilst the youngest, Charles O'Neill, received a commission in the army.

When we look back and read of the brilliant provincial society of Kilkenny at the beginning of this century, it may well be said that the glory has departed from Ireland. A sort of provincial court was kept up at Ormonde Castle, and the noble house of Butler was also famous for its convivial hospitality. Kilkenny had its "season" then as well as Dublin, which lasted for six weeks in winter and two in summer. The first week was devoted to the theatre, and the second to hunting, racing, and balls. There was a private theatre at Kilkenny at this time, wherein the gentlemen amateurs of the company used to subscribe and engage the best actresses from London and Dublin. The price was the same to pit and boxes—viz., six shillings and eleven pence for each ticket, and the proceeds were always

given to charity. Large sums were realised at these performances, as the country gentry used to come from far and near to witness them. In one of her letters Miss Maria Edgeworth records her delight at having been taken to the Kilkenny Theatre, and her surprise at the excellence of the acting.

These private theatricals were first inaugurated in Kilkenny in 1802, when the theatre was opened with a prologue written by Mr. Tighe, who also took part in the performance. These were the palmy days of Kilkenny, when the town was thronged by the leaders of the Irish aristocracy, and lodgings were at a premium. At the Castle, the Butlers dispensed splendid Irish hospitality, the grand suppers after the theatricals being one of the chief attractions of the season. Rank, wit, beauty, and literature were well represented there. Thomas Moore was a welcome guest always, and in 1809 wrote and spoke an epilogue at the opening of the season. In 1812, just as Miss O'Neill was beginning to show promise of her great talents, she acted *Belinda* at the Kilkenny Theatre.

Amongst these gentlemen amateurs Mr. Wrixon-Beecher was distinguished, not alone for the excellence but for the originality of his acting. Ladies also gave their aid, and Mrs. John Power wrote the prologue for the opening of the season

of 1818. The following extract from it shows that the lady inherited the talent as well as the blood of the Bushes and Grattans :—

Oh ! much-loved Erin, would thy sons who roam,
Exert their talents, nor despise their home ;
Then might this isle, deformed, and sunk in fame,
With other nations proudly rank her name.
Has not their genius shone through foreign climes,
In Wellington—the wonder of our times ?
To him united Europe trust the sword,
To draw or sheathe it, as he gives the word.
With pride old Leinster sent her warrior forth,
Renowned in arms, beloved for private worth.
What names more high than Pack among the brave,
Or Ponsonby, just rescued from the grave ?
Boast we not Grattan's high, unsullied name—
Our truest patriot in the list of fame ;
Who, scorning party, praise, and blame, withstood—
One glorious object his—his country's good ?
Does Erin want a bard her name to raise
While Moore, fresh-crowned with never-fading bays,
Unrivalled, sings his own harmonious lays ?
What varied talents to our bar belong—
Applauding senates hang on Plunket's tongue,
The statesman's wisdom with the poet's fire.
Then fair O'Neill ranks first on Britain's stage,
While Edgeworth gives to youth the sense of age,
And all admire O'Donnell's patriot page.

On the 28th of October, 1819, the Kilkenny Theatre was opened for the last time. During the season Miss O'Neill had played there several times; and here she met, and played with, Mr. Wrixon-Beecher, whom she subsequently married. The first night she appeared, the audience—ladies included—received her *standing*, to mark not merely their admiration for her genius, but their respect for her character. A magnificent ball was given

at the theatre upon this night. It commenced with a country dance, in which Mr. Gervase Power led off Miss Kavanagh, and Miss O'Neill was led down the dance by Richard Power of Kilfane. The play selected was "Richard the Third," Wrixon-Beecher playing *Richard*, and Miss O'Neill *Lady Anne*. The following list of the performers may possess some interest for their descendants :—

Last Season of the Kilkenny Private Theatricals.

OCTOBER 28TH, 1819.

The Company.

Mr. R. Power.	Sir J. C. Coghill.
Mr. Rothe.	Mr. J. Power.
Mr. Beecher.	Mr. G. Hill.
Mr. Corry.	Mr. Hare.
Lord Monck.	Mr. Dixon.
Mr. R. Langrish.	Mr. Smythe.
Mr. R. Rothe.	Mr. Anderson.
Mr. J. Power, jun.	Mr. E. Helsham.
Mr. R. Power, jun.	Mr. R. Helsham.
Mr. G. Power.	Mr. H. Helsham.
Mr. H. A. Bushe.	Mr. T. Hill.
Mr. Annesley.	Mr. Shee.
Mr. Holmes.	Mr. M. Shee.
Mr. Gyles.	Mr. Bookey.
Mr. M'Caskey.	Mr. Fleming.
Lord Hawarden.	Mr. Marshall.
Lord James Stuart.	

Masters Dalton and Brenan.

Miss O'Neill.	Miss Roche.
Miss Walstein.	Miss Curtis.
Miss Kelly.	Miss Eyrety.

Miss Johnston.

Mrs. Siddons was justly proud of having won tears from Burke ; and Miss O'Neill might feel no less proud of having won the heart of one of the most accomplished and famous men of the day :—

The gallant man,
Who led the van
Of the Irish volunteers !

Miss O'Neill's success was truly wonderful. What must not have been the grace and genius of the unfriended young Irish girl, to have so speedily won her exalted position before a public with the sublime Siddons and the comet-like Kean fresh in their memories ! She was a lion in London society, and Sir Walter Scott was fond of telling how he and Miss O'Neill were once seized upon by a famous lion-hunter at Highgate. They got into some ground entirely surrounded by an iron railing, and Sir Walter turned to the lion-hunter and said :

"Now, your fortune is made ! Hoist a flag on a pole, and placard that you have got a beautiful lion and lioness, and in half an hour you will have multitudes to see us ; and we shall roar in grand style, shall we not, Miss O'Neill ?"*

In the December of the same year upon which the Kilkenny Theatre was closed for ever,

* *Vide* Lockhart's "Scott," vol. i. p. 391.

Miss O'Neill was married to Mr. Wrixon-Beecher. The event was thus recorded in an Irish newspaper :—

“Miss Eliza O'Neill was married December 18th, 1819, to William Wrixon-Beecher, Esq., M.P. for Mallow, and one of the most celebrated and accomplished of our theatrical amateurs. The ceremony was performed at Kilfane Church by the Dean of Ossory. The whole of Miss O'Neill's fortune was settled on her family. Her loss to the public is much regretted.”

Miss O'Neill's professional career was at once the shortest and the most brilliant ever known. From the time when she played *Juliet* by accident in the Crow Street Theatre, in Dublin, up to the day of her marriage, her career was one of uninterrupted success. Like all true geniuses, she was excessively modest in her estimate of her own powers, and no entreaties could prevail upon her to take a public farewell of the stage. This was rather remarkable, considering how very well the public had treated her. Miss O'Neill's retirement was much lamented, and the throne of tragedy was indeed declared deserted when she voluntarily vacated it. Amongst English tragic actresses, her only superior was Mrs. Siddons, and in her own particular walk she has never had a rival.

Miss O'Neill was scarcely above the medium

height. Miss Wynne says of her: "She was always graceful, merely because she could not help it; because it was impossible to throw those beautifully formed limbs, and especially that neck, into any position that was not beautiful."* Her eyes were blue, her hair light, and her features exquisitely expressive. The mournful cadence of her full-toned melodious voice was admirably suited to tragedy, but quite out of place when she attempted comedy—for in the latter line she always appeared ill at ease, and her laugh was so palpably assumed that it grated upon the ears of her audience.

After her marriage, she lived quietly on her husband's estate in the south of Ireland. By the death of his uncle, in 1831, Mr. Beecher succeeded to the baronetcy, and the *ci-devant* actress became Lady Wrixon-Beecher. She survived her husband—by whom she had a numerous family—several years, and peacefully closed her long and blameless life on the 20th of October, 1872, at the advanced age of eighty-one years.

The Annual Register for October, 1872, gives the following account of her death:—

"Lady Beecher (Miss O'Neill), relict of Sir William Wrixon-Beecher, died at her residence,

* "Diary of a Lady of Quality," p. 102.

Ballygiblin, near Mallow, on the 20th. The deceased lady, who had attained her eighty-first year, at one time occupied a most prominent position in the theatrical profession. The great dramatic genius and brilliant triumphs of Miss O'Neill are matters of history. On the stage she had no rival ; in fact, she elevated the profession, and gave to it dignity and respectability. In her famous characters of *Mrs. Haller* and *Mrs. Beverley* and *Belvidera*, contemporary critics represent her as having been unapproachable in her realisation of these impersonations. In early life, it is said, 'the great Miss O'Neill,' as her ladyship was designated, passed through much and severe trial ; but her genius, which was unquestionable, and her determination of character, which is represented as something astonishing, enabled her successfully to surmount all the difficulties and obstructions which beset her path. Her first appearance was made in a rather humble manner, and in company with humble companions, in a small provincial town ; but on her *début* in London, in 1814, she at once occupied, if not the first, at least a most distinguished position, and after a brief time was unanimously hailed as 'The Great Miss O'Neill.' The deceased lady, who was a native of Ireland, was in private life as remarkable for true benevolence and practical kindness as she was during her

professional career for the splendour of her histrionic abilities."

Lady Wrixon-Beecher's unblemished character as a woman, was a fitting accompaniment to her brilliant public career; and her noble character will long be honoured in many circles and many homes where the brief triumphs of the stage would perhaps be held of but little account.





CATHERINE HAYES.

BORN, A.D. 1828. DIED, A.D. 1861.

AS the possessor of rare histrionic talents—scarcely less remarkable than her marvellous vocal gifts—Catherine Hayes is entitled to a place amongst those of her countrywomen who have been more decidedly disciples of Melpomene and Thalia. Of Erin's many gifted daughters, she is the only one who has gained European fame as a songstress; many of her countrywomen have done excellently in this respect, but she has excelled them all. It is a curious fact that Ireland, so essentially the land of song, should have given to the lyric stage but one single female vocalist, capable of interpreting with success the higher branches of dramatic music. In every other art our country has given proof of the genius of her children; but as a vocalist—Irish by birth—who has achieved triumphs which place in the shade many of the proudest vocal victories of foreign prima donnas, Catherine Hayes stands alone.

One summer's evening a pleasure party were idly rowing along the Shannon, where it passes the pleasure-grounds of the Earl of Limerick, and the gardens of the See house. Suddenly, upon the stillness of the evening air there was poured forth a flood of melody, so sweet, so pure, so fresh, that they all remained transfixed with delight as they listened to the unknown singer. Unconscious of the audience, the unseen continued to pour forth song after song, finishing up with "The Lass o' Gowrie," which was concluded with a prolonged and thrilling shake. A rapturous shout of applause from the listeners betrayed their presence to the frightened child, little "Kitty" Hayes, then scarcely ten years old.

Catherine Hayes was born at No. 4, Patrick Street, Limerick, in 1828, and early showed evidences of her wonderful musical gifts. Her grandmother was housekeeper to the Earl of Limerick, and with this relative the child spent much of her time. Her chief delight was to sit in one of the arbours in a garden skirting the Shannon, and there to warble forth all the old Irish—or any other—songs and ballads which she could pick up. One of the listeners upon the particular summer's evening referred to was the Hon. and Right Reverend Edmund Knox, Bishop of Limerick, himself a musician and musical critic

of no mean ability. His practised ear at once discerned the rare qualities of voice of the juvenile songstress. Inquiries were made as to who and what she was, and from that day forth the Bishop of Limerick became her patron. Society at that time in Limerick was very musical, and the Bishop's *protégée* was soon acknowledged as a star in the circle. A lady—a distinguished amateur—undertook to give the child lessons in music, and was more than astonished at the marvellous aptitude which she displayed. On one occasion she asked Kitty to execute a shake. The child bashfully demurred, but upon her teacher playing one upon the piano, and desiring her to try and imitate it, the child, as if inspired, not alone imitated it, but introduced so many wonderful and enthralling flights of sweetness, that her preceptress was utterly overcome with amazement and admiration. The lady, upon conscientious grounds, refused to have anything more to say to Kitty's musical education. She appealed to the Bishop, telling him the child had a fortune in her voice.

The parents of Catherine Hayes were in very straitened circumstances, and quite unable to defray the expenses of a first-class musical education for their daughter. Accordingly the Bishop consulted some friends who were interested in the little girl, the result being that a subscription was

speedily set on foot, and a large sum raised for the purpose of giving her the advantage of proper tuition.

Signor Antonio Sapio, then recognised as the first teacher of singing in Ireland, was the master selected for Catherine Hayes, who took up her residence with him in Dublin on April 1st, 1839.

She was now but eleven years of age, with a full, clear, silvery soprano voice, much pure and refined natural taste, and very little knowledge of music. The intention was to cultivate her talent with a view of enabling her to earn her living as a concert singer. Her master lost no opportunity of bringing her prominently before the public, and on May 3rd, 1839, about a month after her arrival in Dublin, she made her first appearance before an audience in that city. The concert was held in the great room of the Rotunda; and the youthful singer was cordially welcomed. The old duet, "O'er shepherd pipe," she sang with Signor Sapio, and was encored in it.

Young as Catherine Hayes was, her perseverance and industry were marvellous. When she made her next appearance at a concert given by the Anacreontic Society, in the December of the same year, her master's musical friends were unfeignedly surprised at the progress which she had made. Her execution of "Qui la voce," from "I Puritani,"

and "Come per sereno," excited no ordinary amount of admiration. When she paid a visit to her native city of Limerick, about a month afterwards, her friends there considered her improvement nothing short of magical. Their expectations were more than realised, and a concert at which she sang there, for the joint benefit of herself and Signor Sapio, gave her substantial proof of the estimation in which she was held by her townspeople.

But this intense application began to tell upon her health, and during the next year she was obliged to relax her studies. Not until 1841 did she again sing in public, when she was introduced to Liszt, who was charmed with her voice. She was now recognised as one of the chief concert singers in Dublin, and raised her terms, a prosaic but certain mode of demonstrating her popularity.

Up to this time it had been the height of Catherine Hayes's ambition to become a first-class concert singer. The idea of the operatic stage had never occurred to her mind, nor to that of any of her patrons. Lablache first suggested the subject. He heard her sing—sang a duet with her—and predicted a brilliant future for her. Giving her some good advice, and recommending her to go and hear Grisi and Mario—then performing in Dublin—he dismissed her with the following letter to Signor Sapio :—

"I have heard with infinite pleasure your pupil, Miss Hayes, and I find she possesses all the qualities to make a good singer. With your instructions she can but gain every day, and I am certain she will end by becoming a perfect vocalist in every sense of the word."

The same night she went to hear Grisi, and Catherine Hayes then and there decided upon studying for the operatic stage. With a letter of introduction to Mr. George Osborne, she shortly afterwards set out for Paris, there to study under the world-famed Manuel Garcia.

"The dearest, the kindest, and the most generous of masters!" Catherine Hayes always called him. He took a very great interest in the young Irish girl, and at the end of eighteen months advised her to go to Italy and study there, as *he* could not add a single grace or charm to her beautiful voice. She acted upon this advice, and proceeded to Milan, where she placed herself under the instruction of the most famous tutor for the lyric stage to be found in Italy. This was Signor Ronconi, who introduced her to the famous Signora Grassini. This latter lady was as kind-hearted and as generous-minded as she was talented. Instead of feeling any professional jealousy when she heard Catherine Hayes sing, she warmly congratulated her, and did everything in her power to further her interests. She even

wrote to her friend, Signor Provini, impresario of the Opera at Marseilles, telling him of this new star which had just risen upon the horizon of the musical world. So enthusiastic was she, that Signor Provini actually came to Milan, heard Miss Hayes, offered her most liberal terms, and she forthwith entered into an engagement with him for two months.

So on the 10th of May, 1845, Catherine Hayes made her first appearance on the operatic stage, at the Opera House of Marseilles. The opera selected was "I Puritani," Miss Hayes sustaining the part of *Elvira*. There was a crowded house, and the young girl was very nervous. She stood, half fainting, at the wings, feeling sure of nothing except certain failure, and stepped on the stage with despair on her agitated face and in her heart. Scene after scene she went through almost mechanically, and her failure seemed sealed. But all at once, upon commencing the polacca "Son Vergin," her recklessness caused her to forget everything, and she sang the exquisite air as her audience had never before heard it sung. As she concluded, a rapturous burst of applause utterly bewildered her. She was encored, and as she concluded the air the second time, she felt all her fears dispelled, for she *knew* she had fulfilled the dream of her life, and had succeeded. When the

curtain fell, she was enthusiastically called before it, whilst bouquets were showered upon her by the delighted audience.

“*Lucia di Lammermoor*” was the next opera in which she appeared, and in which she also scored a success. Signor Provini offered her an engagement at the Opera in Paris, but she declined, and returned to Milan, there to further prosecute her studies. The same year she played at La Scala, being then but seventeen, and the youngest artiste who had ever filled the position of prima donna at that vast theatre. Miss Hayes was at first not very successful at La Scala, owing to her extreme nervousness. “*La Sonnambula*” was the first occasion upon which she pleased her audience there; and in “*Otello*” she made such a charming *Desdemona* that the music-loving Milanese gave her the name of “*La Perla del Teatro*.” From Milan she went to Vienna, thence to Venice, where she made her appearance in a new opera, composed expressly for her by a young Italian nobleman. The music of this production was indifferent, the singers worse.

“The audience received the opera with chilling silence, and when Cattarina entered in the middle of the first act, she found the house in a horribly bad humour. At sight of her fair, young face, however, and on hearing the clear tones of her

sweet soprano, the anger of the audience gradually disappeared ; and although Catherine could not save the piece from condemnation, she rescued it for this one night. She then appeared as *Lucia*, with great success. During the rondo of the third act the audience was so silent that (said the *Figaro* of Venice) the buzzing of a fly might have been heard ; and at the close of the opera Miss Hayes was called twice on the stage, and applauded for nearly ten minutes. In 'Linda di Chamouni' she was not only completely successful, but was the cause of a little theatrical uproar. At Venice, the law regarding theatres prohibits any artiste, at any theatre, from appearing before the curtain more than thrice in compliance with a call from the audience ; but when Miss Hayes had retired at the end of the opera, on this occasion, the excited crowd shouted for her to come forward a fourth time. The young prima donna dared not venture to disobey the police regulations ; and the excitement then became terrific, the audience asseverating that if she did not appear as many times as they chose to call for her they would tear down the theatre ; it was judged advisable to yield to their wishes, and, when she finally appeared, she was covered with flowers."*

* *Vide* "Queens of Song," vol. i. p. 284.

A series of brilliant successes in the various continental cities followed this, and in April, 1849, Catherine Hayes sang for the first time in the Royal Italian Opera, London. Her fellow artistes were Mesdames Grisi, Persiani, and Brambilla; Signori Mario, Salvi, the two Lablaches, and Tamburini; and her salary for the season was 1300*l*. Donizetti's "*Linda di Chamouni*" was the piece selected for her first appearance in London. Much to her surprise, the audience received her with a rapturous burst of applause, which at first completely unnerved her. As the play proceeded, she never sang or acted so well in her life, and her audience were not slow to perceive that she was overcome by some powerful emotion. When the curtain fell, her fellow-singers soon divined the cause, for the brilliant young prima donna was found in a private box, sobbing forth tears of gratitude at the feet of her first and early friend, the Bishop of Limerick.

Miss Hayes played important parts during the season, always calling forth warm eulogiums both from her audience and from the press. Towards the close of the season, the Irish prima donna had the honour of singing before Her Majesty at a State Concert given at Buckingham Palace. The Queen entered into conversation with her, said she had heard of her career, complimented her upon

her deserved success, and introduced her to Prince Albert, who predicted future and greater honours for her.

All this time "the Irish Lind," as she was called, had not revisited her native land, so that, after an absence of seven years, when she was announced to appear at one of the Dublin Philharmonic Concerts, a crowded house was the result, and she was received with a truly Irish welcome, which threw all continental ones into the shade. Her second appearance in Dublin was at the Theatre Royal; and the following account of the performance appeared soon after in *The Dublin University Magazine*:—

"The opera was 'Lucia di Lammermoor,' the *Edgardo* of the evening being Signor Pagliere, an unknown performer. His ludicrous inefficiency elicited shouts of laughter, with a variety of ingenious mimics from the wags among the audience—the manifestations of disapprobation for him being blended with loud applause for the frightened *débutante*. In the midst of this uproar and noise, a more glaring breakdown than before on *Edgardo's* part was followed by a hurricane of 'cat-calls,' Miss Hayes, with wonderful self-possession, curtsied to that unfortunate gentleman, and left the stage.

"The curtain was then rung down, and an in-

describable scene of tumultuous excitement followed; cheers, groans, laughter, hisses, forming a very Babel of discord. Mr. Sims Reeves—who, with Mr. Whitworth, Miss Lucombe, and an English Opera Company, had terminated an engagement the day of Miss Hayes's coming—occupied a private box, and sat during all this turmoil full in view of the audience. He was quickly recognised, and shouts of 'Reeves! Reeves!' rose from nearly every part of the house. The lessee, Mr. Calcraft, on this came forward, and intimated that 'he had then no control over Mr. Reeves, whose engagement had terminated, and who, on being asked to sing on this emergency, had positively declined.' Mr. Reeves instantly sprang to his feet, leaned out of the box, and on obtaining a partial silence, said, in no very temperate tones: 'Ladies and gentlemen, I will sing to oblige you, but not to oblige Mr. Calcraft.' On which the lessee, in the blandest tones, concluded the first act of unpleasantness in these words: 'I am not angry, I assure you, that Mr. Reeves has declined to sing to oblige me; but I am gratified to find that he has consented to do so to please the audience, and doubly gratified because, under the untoward circumstances, he will support your gifted and distinguished young countrywoman.'

“After the necessary delay of dressing, &c., the curtain again rose, and the opera proceeded, Mr. Reeves performing *Edgar* better than on any former occasion in this city, and Miss Hayes nerving herself so fully for her task that no trace of tremulousness, no shadow of the agitating scene through which she had passed, marred the beauty of her singing and acting. At the termination of each act they were both called before the curtain, and when the opera concluded their presence was again and again demanded, amid the most furious waving, not only of hats and handkerchiefs, but of canes and umbrellas. The curtain having finally descended, the lessee came forward, Mr. Reeves also appearing at the wing, and still in the costume of *Edgardo*. This occasioned a renewal of the uproar, but mutual explanations ensued, and the singer and manager shook hands upon the stage. This unfortunate disturbance had nearly proved fatal to the success of the first appearance of Catherine Hayes in the metropolitan theatre of her birthplace ; that success being thus suddenly imperilled and so nearly marred, it is not surprising that Miss Hayes should refer to this incident as the most painful throughout her entire career.”

After this short engagement in Dublin, where her *Norma* was enthusiastically received, she went

on a provincial tour, visiting her native city of Limerick, delighting her old friends with her glorious voice. In 1850 she again visited Ireland, returning to London for the opera season at Her Majesty's Theatre. But she worked too hard. Not gifted with as strong a physique as a brain, her health began to give way, and during the summer and autumn she was obliged to rest and recruit herself. As soon as ever she was able to resume her professional duties Miss Hayes went on a tour through Ireland again, creating an excitement not one whit less than the famous "Lind mania" of 1847. A series of provincial engagements in England followed, and then the Irish singer went to sing at the Carnival in Rome.

All over the Continent of Europe the name of "the Irish Lind" was well known. Both in England and Ireland, as well as in every continental city, she had sung successfully, and she longed for a wider sphere in which to display her abilities. Accordingly, she projected and commenced the most extraordinary tour that had then ever been undertaken by an artiste. It was no less than to circumnavigate the globe, singing at all the chief cities. So she left England for New York in 1851, accompanied by Mr. Augustus Braham and Herr Menghis. Her visit to New

York was nearly a failure, owing to bad management. In this difficulty Mr. Evory Bushnell, a famous electioneering agent, seeing where the mistake lay, came forward and offered himself as the manager of her tour. Miss Hayes was losing heavily, so she, in despair, accepted this offer, which she found no reason ever to regret. So wonderful a professional tour was never made before nor since, as the following business record of it will show :—

“ December, 1851, she was at Philadelphia ; she arrived at San Francisco, November, 1852, and was singing in California in 1853. Her success in this region was marvellous ; fabulous sums were paid for the choice of seats, and one ticket sold for 1150 dollars. She then departed for South America, and after visiting the principal cities, embarked for the Gold Fields of Australia. She gave concerts in the Sandwich Islands, and arrived in Sydney, January, 1854. From Sydney she went to Melbourne and Adelaide. At Melbourne she became such a favourite that when she announced her departure a petition most numerous signed was presented to her, begging her to continue her performances for some time. From Adelaide she went to India, giving concerts in Calcutta and Singapore. March, 1855, she gave, in aid of the Patriotic Fund, a concert which

realised upwards of 200*l*. She then went to Batavia, and in the capital of Java she created an immense sensation. From thence she turned her steps to Port Philip, revisited Melbourne and Sydney, appeared at the Bendigo Goldfields, and sang at Hobart Town and Launceston. She then re-embarked for England in the *Royal Charter*, arriving at Liverpool, August, 1856, after an absence from England of five years."

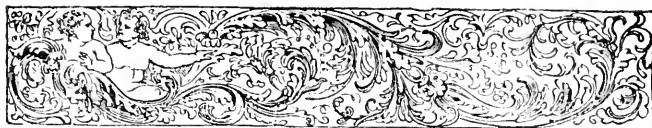
The following October Miss Hayes married Mr. Evory Bushnell, the enterprising manager of her tour. After her marriage she sang and played, still retaining her maiden name. Her husband, who had been delicate for some time, became a confirmed invalid a few years after their marriage. For the sake of his health they eventually fixed their residence at Biarritz, where he died.

Mrs. Bushnell returned to England, but the enormous fatigue she had undergone at last began to tell upon a never over-strong frame. On Sunday, August the 11th, 1861, she quietly died at Sydenham, in the zenith of her fame, and at the early age of thirty-three.

The professional career of Catherine Hayes has been at once one of the shortest, one of the most brilliant, and one of the greatest pecuniary suc-

cesses upon record. At her death she left property to the amount of 16,000*l*. Unlike the generality of her countrypeople, Catherine Hayes was especially shrewd in business matters, and fond of money, even to parsimony.

In no department of vocal music did Catherine Hayes's exquisite voice sound to such perfection as when singing Irish ballads. Her rendering of Mrs. Norton's "*Kathleen Mavourneen*" has been said to have been perfectly entrancing from the witching sweetness of the singer's voice. Through her magical singing of the national Irish airs she exercised a spell over her Irish audiences, for since the days of Catherine Stephens no singer had swayed them as did their gifted countrywoman, Catherine Hayes.



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